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CONTENTS MAY 2015







In this issue

- 14 Editor's letter
- 16 Contributors
- 23 Word of mouth The places and people creating a stir around the world, from Montauk to Milan
- 34 Short break Morocco's seaside escape, Essaouira, still has a hippy spirit but has recently smartened up its act with new cafés and galleries
- 40 **Snapshot** Juice bars: where getting a raw deal is a good thing
- 43 Trendwatch How Airbnb has opened doors to a whole new generation of homestays
- 51 Where to stay An exclusive first look at the renovated Singita Rajmahal Palace in Jaipur; Sally Shalam's Great British Breaks; Bed-hopping with Bond girl Olga Kurylenko; The Weekender goes to Churt in Surrey
- 65 Style file The secret life of Brazilian model Ana Beatriz Barros. plus chic nightwear that's seeing the light of day. Beauty Oscar-winning actress Halle Berry. Jewellery Beautifully structured pieces inspired by city skylines. Men's Traversing Nigeria's coastline by jet ski. On the scene Waldorf Astoria Shanghai
- 144 A traveller's tales Around the world with dapper actor Bill Nighy

- 146 In Britain Browsing the streets of the book-loving Hay-on-Wye
- 155 The experts Health Clinique La Prairie's age-defying therapy Books Reviewing Congo's greatest writer, Alain Mabanckou; plus tourist information for Atlantis. Gadgets A fold-up kayak. World on a plate Houmous and the wine to dip into. **Q&A** Advice on feasting in Oaxaca, family breaks in Cornwall, and more
- 168 Competition Win a holiday in Southern Africa worth £3,300
- 170 Reader offer Save £2,000 on a 10-night coast and city trip to Brazil
- 212 Bar with a view At Sardinia's Su Gologone hotel







On the cover

Kuro camp at Tarangire National Park in Tanzania, one of this year's **Hot List hotels**

Photograph by Paul Joynson-Hicks



RICHARD MILLE

RICHARD MILLE BOUTIQUES LONDON





EDITOR'S LETTER



o LAST WEEK MY BATTERY RAN OUT. There I was, having a terrific time celebrating my mother's birthday with her friends over Sunday lunch, when – zap. One minute everyone is telling funny stories and laughing and pretending not to stare at a woman who is wearing a full set of emeralds and diamonds given to her by Elizabeth Taylor, and the next minute, ker-plunk. Driving back to London to get the train to Paris, I'm trying to negotiate a snooze in the passenger seat. 'Are you going to be OK?' my husband Marcus asks, as my head flops this way and that. 'Do you know what suitcase you are going to use?' It's such a boy question. 'Of course I do,' I snap. Of course I don't, and though I don't miss the train, which is astonishing, I have left all my clothes behind except an absurd amount of shoes and a massive pair of pants. I so wanted to be crisp and clean at the Paris fashion shows, but now I'm borrowing clothes from my niece and I've had a weird reaction to the pants

which has left a bright-red mark from my thigh to my tummy button.

It's lunchtime and I'm lying on my niece's bed in our Paris hotel. We are eating fries from room service. Every time a new character appears in the TV show she is watching, she yelps and leaps out of her skin. 'I'm very anxious,' she says, nibbling a nail. 'My battery has run out,' I say, staring at the ceiling. My mobile pings. 'Are you ready to go?' it reads, 'the show starts in 10 minutes.' I am in a dressing gown and biker boots. It turns out I no longer know how to read a 24-hour clock.

Other things I cannot do now that my battery has run out: drive for too long as my foot gets tired on the accelerator. Understand double negatives. Spell. Brush my hair without needing to have a lie-down afterwards. I am blaming the holiday in Mexico. Every time I book a holiday, I realise how much I need the holiday, how much I'm hanging on for the holiday; in fact, just how much severe trouble I would be in if the holiday was NOT upcoming. Have I booked rooms? No. Can I book rooms? No, as I am paralysed, obviously, by the aforementioned lack of battery.

Last night I went to a Chelsea match. How I love a crowd. There is nothing like mass energy, even if it's rotten to the core, that lulls one into thinking one's battery is just dandy. I had no idea what was actually happening on the pitch but it all felt very thrilling. I did miss a goal because I was too busy Instagramming a picture of the crowd. And I was fixated by how small the players were on the pitch, like cheesy Wotsits that I could pick up with my fingers and munch. 'I TELL YOU WHAT IS SURPRISING,' I shout excitedly above the barbaric yawp to my charming host, 'IS HOW MANY CHELSEA FANS ARE FRENCH.'

At the end of the match, pushing our way back through the crowd, invigorated by the lime-greenness of the pitch, and the fray, and the frisson of police horses, I repeat to Marcus, 'I know that Chelsea is now so expensive that only foreigners can live there, but still, I am amazed that the team has so many French supporters. 'Chelsea were playing Paris Saint-German,' he says, adding slowly, 'the other team were French.'

This is the new issue of Condé Nast Traveller. For those who need to hang on until Mexico.

Melinda Stevens Editor



@MelindaStevens3



THE READERS' TRAVEL AWARDS 2015 VOTE ONLINE FOR A CHANCETO WIN A HOLIDAY IN MARRAKECH WWW.CNTRAVELLER.COM/RTA

VOTING CLOSES ON 4 MAY AND RESULTS WILL APPEAR IN THE OCTOBER ISSUE, ON SALE 3 SEPTEMBER, AND ONLINE

All information and travel details are correct at the time of going to press and may no longer be so on the date of publication.

Unless otherwise stated, hotel prices are low-season rates and restaurant prices are for a three-course meal for two without drinks



Inspired by our feature on Copenhagen, we asked our contributors for their favourite design destinations...





Antonia Quirke Writer, Cape May (p116) 'Naples. In its crammed, crazy way it's anti-design. I love its sheer architectural chaos: early Christian fragments and tiny cloistered gardens, thongs on high washing lines and Caravaggios in the churches. Dilapidated, intensely superstitious and aware of death, it's also sexy.' Antonia is one of the presenters of BBC Radio 4's 'The Film Programme' and 'Pick of the Week'





Caroline West Photographer, Cape May (p116)
'I love a shop called Seasonal Concepts in **Sydney**. It stocks a menagerie of vintage stuffed animals, quaint Australiana and hand-crafted textiles. It's also a florist, which lends a heady, exotic atmosphere to the place.' Caroline divides her time between Sydney and Victoria, Canada





Craig Fordham Photographer, Hay-on-Wye (p146)
'Most of Scandinavia. I fell in love with its understated stylish design when I came across the magazine Stockholm Now many years ago.' Essex-based Craig is a regular contributor to the Guardian and the Sunday Times. He has travelled from the Baltic Coast to the British Virgin Isles for this magazine





Matthew Buck Photographer, Copenhagen (p134) 'Whether you are seeking out a 1950s pineapple-shaped ice bucket or a vintage Børge Mogensen chair, you can normally find it in **London** somewhere. From Alfie's Antique Market in Marylebone to Aram in Covent Garden, there are so many diverse places to shop that you really can find almost anything.' Matthew is in charge of the magazine's photographic production





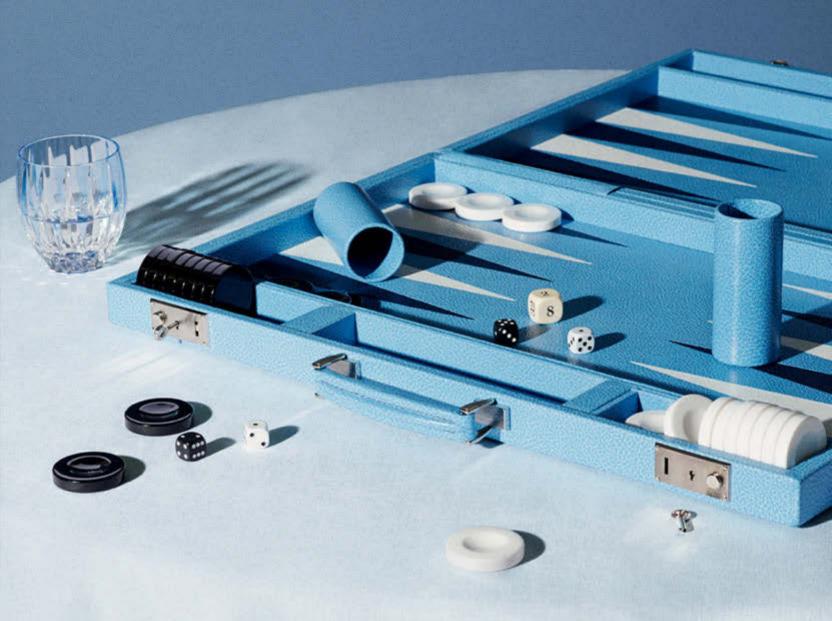
Charles Spreckley *Writer, Tokyo* (p106) **'Naoshima**, the Japanese island dedicated to art. Once it was a beautiful community of traditional houses, then it was largely abandoned. Now it has been reinvented as an art destination with brutalist architecture among the ruins, which include an abandoned copper refinery.' *Charles lives in Tokyo and is working on a book about the city's creative talents*





Daisy Donovan *Writer, Copenhagen (p134)*Td like to be able to say Tokyo, but I would need to have actually been there. The frivolous part of me can't resist **Palm Springs**. It is mid-century heaven. Palm trees and swimming pools – the society photographer Slim Aarons got it right.' *Daisy is a TV presenter and actress as well as a writer, and is currently working on a teen comedy for Working Title*

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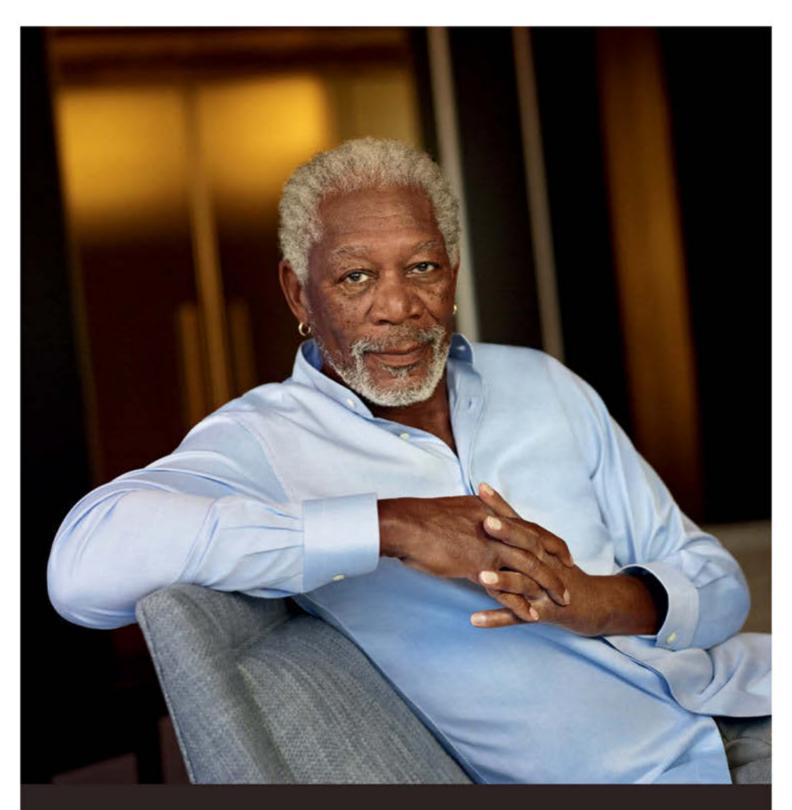
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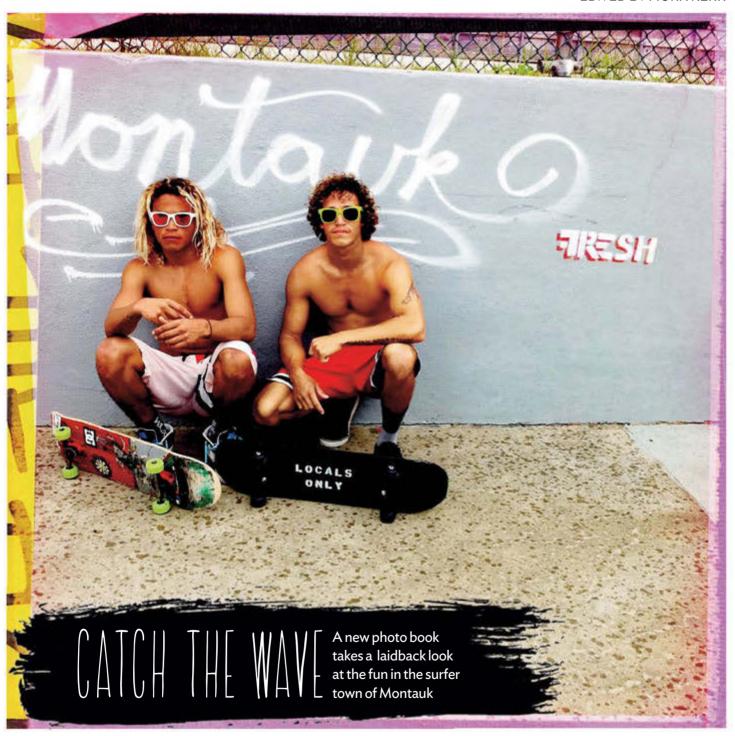
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WORD OF MOUTH

What's hot in New York State Milan Ibiza Dorset Zimbabwe

EDITED BY FIONA KERR



t the very tip of Long Island, Montauk is where Jagger and Warhol escaped New York to in the 1970s but it's only more recently that a fully fledged scene has sprung up, as the younger, hipper alternative to the neighbouring Hamptons. Boutique lodges and party spots such as Ruschmeyer's and The Sloppy Tuna have changed the make-up of what was once mostly the domain of hardy fishermen and foolhardy surfers. British-born photographer Ben Watts (brother of actress Naomi) has owned a cottage on Lake Montauk since 1998, and his latest book, *Montauk Dreaming* (Damiani, £29), out this month, is a homage to his adopted home, filled with colourful, high-contrast snaps of surf, sand and sun. 'Montauk is a candid, casual place,' he says. 'It has changed a lot, but now there are options. If you want it, you take it; if not, you stay at home and cook. Either way, it's a magical town.' SUNSHINE FLINT

BEN WATTS' MONTAUK

THE PHOTOGRAPHER SHARES HIS LOCAL TIPS

★ For a cold one: The Montauket on Fort Pond Bay has amazing sunsets. ★ A day by the sea:

Gin Beach on Block Island Sound to avoid the crowds. ★ See and be seen: Sean MacPherson's The Crow's Nest is the best restaurant on the East End. He did it right. ★ Best eats: Rick's Crabby Cowboy Café on East Lake Drive for a lobster roll.







In the age of the iPad, the pencil is an endangered species. So much so that the humble HB is now becoming a work of art in its own right. For a new exhibition in London this month, creative director Alex Hammond and photographer Mike Tinney present images of pencils owned by some of the 20th and 21st century's most celebrated creative names

(clockwise from far left, novelist Alexander McCall Smith, fashion luminary Sir Paul Smith, writer William Boyd and designer Tom Dixon). 'History has been shaped by this simple tool. It has written symphonies, sketched portraits, designed buildings and started revolutions,' says Hammond. 'They also reveal insights about their owners' personalities - is a chewed pencil a sign of anxiety, or creative energy?'. Pencils also function as the medium for some extraordinary artistic endeavours. Using a sewing needle and a tiny blade, São Paulo-born carpenter and artist **Dalton Ghetti** carves tiny sculptures from their graphite tips: letters of the alphabet, domestic tools (right) and intricate interlocking chains, which can take months or years to complete. Elsewhere, American artists Diem Chau and Hoang Tran take a more colourful approach, using crayons as the medium for everything from New York landmarks to carved animals (Chau), or characters from movies and TV series such as Star Wars and Game of Thrones (Tran). 'The Secret Life of the Pencil' is at Paul Smith, 9 Albermarle Street, London, 19 May-3 June



PENINSULA MOMENTS

THE PENINSULA

HOTELS

THE BEAT GOES ON

As Ibiza gears up for a new season, local insider Maya Boyd lays down its freshest cuts



In 1990s Ibiza, Café del Mar on San Antonio's sunset strip was the place to be. So much so the 1993 song named after it became an instant island anthem. These days, that hit spot is Lío, the restaurant that's finally carving out a smart scene in Ibiza's old town. Tellingly, it is owned by the people behind Pacha; the superclub crowd has been replaced by superyacht owners. Yet Ibiza hasn't lost its hippie soul, and is now just as well known for holistic weekends as hedonistic ones.

NEW DESTINATION HUB

Spain's culinary megastars Ferran and Albert Adrià have teamed up with Cirque du Soleil to present **HEART**, a triple-treat dining concept in the marina. The former Ibiza Gran Casino now includes a street-food market, haute gastronomy restaurant and La Boîte, a live-music and performance space.

NEW SUNSHINE HIT

PHOTOGRAPHS: NATALIE BETH HARRIS; ANA LUI PHOTOG JONATHAN GLYNN SMITH; BARBARA UNGARO

Not content with being the island's favourite concierge, **Deliciously Sorted** branches out into suncare this season in collaboration with Neal's Yard Remedies. The range will be stocked in all its clients' villas and hotel rooms, as well as in boutiques across Ibiza.





NEW NAMES TO KNOW

Hit Ibiza Town boutique **reVOLVER** is opening its sunglasses shop in an industrial gallery-style space across the street, stocking covetable frames from the likes of Linda Farrow, Thom Browne, Dita and Valley, *above*. And after recently relocating to the island, former fashion writer Grace Saunders has just launched the **Circa Ibiza** jewellery line, *left*, reworking vintage trinkets and charms into pretty, modern pieces.



NEW SMART STAYS

Chef Simon Johnson's **Agroturismo Morna** (doubles from £75) is a four-room rustic bolthole, with homemade Catalan sausage and foraged-fennel chutney on the menu. And 14 fresh rooms take **Ca Na Xica** (doubles from £137), *above*, with its poplar-framed pool, into big-hitter territory.





ISLAND TUNES

Ibiza resident Robert Miles, left, steps up his OpenLab project this year.
Launched as a radio station in 2013, it is evolving into a social network, online concept store and insider guide, with plans for its own boutique hotel on the island.

The DJ behind global hit 'Children', which sold millions of copies in the mid-1990s, charts his Ibiza musical history

★ 1980 Brian Eno - 'First Light'

'Before all the 1990s superstar-DJ club madness there were parties all over, and this reminds me of one at Benirrás on the north-west coast.'

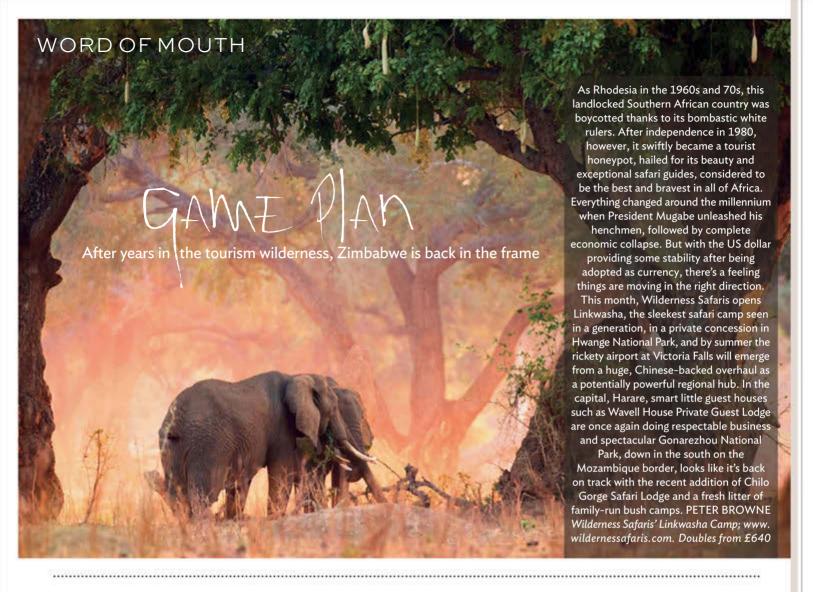
★ 1983 Freur – 'Doot Doot'

'Perfect for chilled afternoons in beachfront cafés. These guys later became the massively successful Underworld.'

★ 2007 Radiohead - 'Go Slowly'

'Languid and atmospheric, this track takes its time – just as I was then, as I'd spent the previous year rebuilding my 500-year-old finca.'

★ 2013 Mattis & The Grand Trunk Road – 'My Weight of the Shame' 'Of all the tracks we played on OpenLab in its first year, this is one of my favourites – haunting and yet an undiscovered gem for most people.'



CHECK IN AND SHAPE UP

Cryotherapy was so 2014. Here are the fresh health crazes muscling in on the action



WHATTHE ...?

Volcanic ash has a high sulphur content, which is said to destroy bacteria and eliminate impurities. Activated charcoal added to juices works on a similar principle, clinging to toxins and drawing them out of the body.

WHERE IT'S AT

The Lava Spa at ION Luxury Adventure Hotel in Iceland uses Sóley Organics hot masks with ash from the Eyjafjallajökull Volcano, while on Maui the Grand Wailea spa/hotel creates bespoke clay and volcanic-ash body treatments. Get your charcoal juice from Botanic Lab in London or Juice Served Here in Los Angeles. Japanese brands Morihata and Rikumo, and Denmark's Sort of Coal have scrubs, masks, soaps and even shampoo with added charcoal.

THETREND

MINDFULNESS AND SLEEP RETREATS

WHATTHE ...?

Long before it became the buzzword of the moment, **mindfulness** was at the heart of many wellness programmes. Now a host of retreats are popping up dedicated specifically to mindfulness, silence or sleep.

WHERE IT'S AT

New tour operator **Mindfulness Journeys** visits Greece, Italy and Morocco, while **Eremito** (*below*) in Umbria has a monastic setting for reflection, with single rooms and silent suppers. For a good night's rest, Hampshire's just-opened **Sleep Hotel** offers programmes for insomnia.



THE TREND DNA DECODING

WHATTHE ...?

The ability to accurately map the human genome has only been around since 2003. It's increasingly being used in serious medi-spas, but now over-the-counter tests are becoming available and affordable, so that everything from diets and fitness regimes to skincare can be tailored to our DNA profile.

WHERE IT'S AT

DNAFit is leading the way in weight-loss and fitness programmes built around analysis of your genes –it now offers retreats at 38

Degrees North in Ibiza. Austin-based
Skinshift and GENEU in London use DNA tests to deliver individual skin profiles and prescribe a cocktail of active ingredients suited

to your biological make-up. TABITHA JOYCE





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THE ONLY WAY IS WESSEX

Why artists, hoteliers and restaurateurs are beating a path to the Dorset coast

ome might call it the Broadchurch effect, but Thomas Hardy's novels have been luring us to Dorset since long before David Tennant began his hunt for a child murderer along the Jurassic Coast. This month our love affair with Wessex is reignited as a fresh adaptation of Far from the Madding Crowd hits cinemas, starring Carey Mulligan as Bathsheba Everdene and Matthias Schoenaerts as Gabriel Oak, with Tom Sturridge and Michael Sheen as Bathsheba's other suitors, Sergeant Troy and William Boldwood. The screenplay is by David 'One Day' Nicholls. Of course, there are other stars too: Mapperton Estate as Everdene Farm, Claydon House as Boldwood's mansion, and West Bay and Eype cliffs around Bridport as Norcombe Hill cliffs and woods.

Sheen might have based himself inland at the 700-year old Bridge House Hotel in Beaminster during filming, but recently it's the Dorset coast that has seen a rush of new hotel openings. Last summer the latest outpost of The Pig group opened 'on the beach' above Studland Bay and was followed quickly by Hix Townhouse in Lyme Regis. This spring the Seaside Boarding House at Burton Bradstock joins them. Dubbed 'Groucho-on-Sea' thanks to owner Mary-Lou Sturridge's previous form as MD of the London members' club, the eight-bedroom clifftop villa has been fitted out with a nod to its Victorian roots, plus there's a restaurant and bar looking out over Lyme Bay for seafood and sundowners.

And another Hardy favourite, Clavell Tower - where the writer is said to have wooed his first love, Eliza Nicholl - gets an update this month, too. As part of Antony Gormley's Land exhibition across five Landmark Trust sites, marking the organisation's 50th anniversary, a life-size iron figure will be installed next to the tower, staring wistfully out to sea, high over Kimmeridge Bay. 'Far from the Madding Crowd' is in cinemas on 1 May



THE TRENDS TAKING OFF AND THOSE RUNNING OUT OF FUEL

X ARRIVALS 1

WALKING TOURS

New app Detour uses location-tracking (to explore at your own pace) and Bluetooth (to tour with friends) for its immersive storytelling tours currently around San Francisco, but with global plans.

MILLENNIALS

The big hotel names have this generation in their sights. Hilton's Canopy offshoot covers the neighbourhood lobby scene. Marriott's Moxy Hotels come with 'plug and meet' areas. And Tommie, from Thompson, offers 'crash pad' rooms.

CROCHET

One of the summer's hottest fashion trends, but also weaving its way into our favourite hotels - check out Sally England's macramé headboards and wall hangings at the Ace Hotel Portland.

DEPARTURES V

SELFIE STICKS

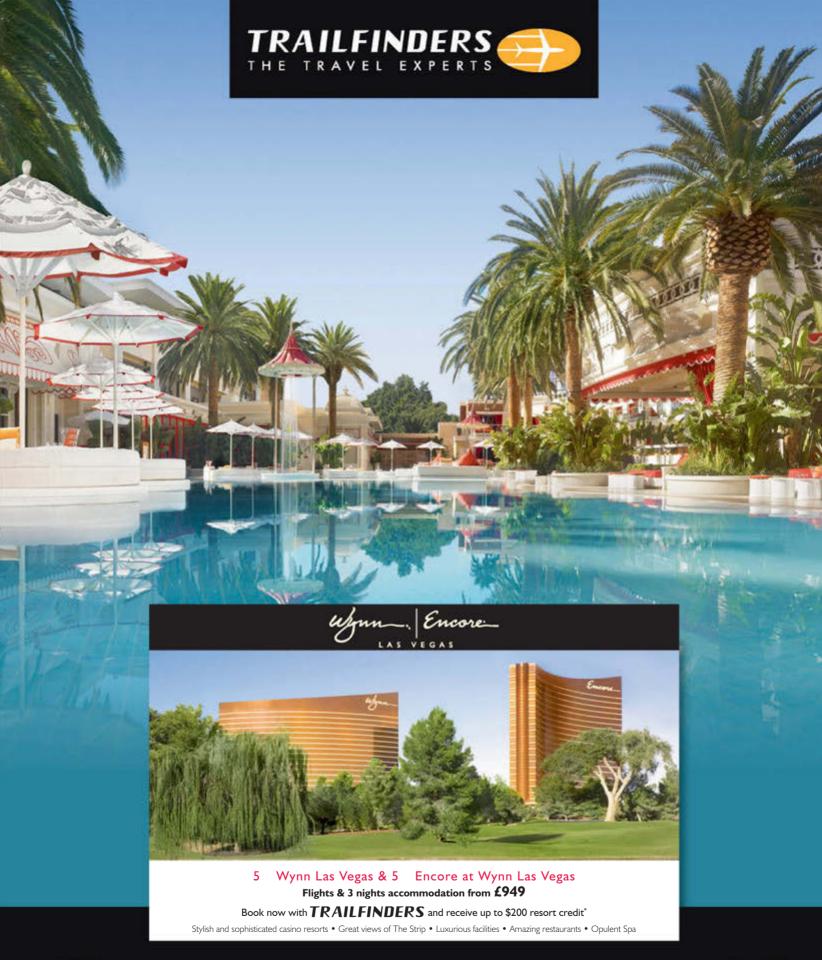
Banned at Paris's Pompidou Centre and the Louvre as well as at New York's MoMA and Met museums. In South Korea, users could face jail or a hefty fine.

BACON

Pig-flavoured everything (vodka, ice cream, jam) is sizzling out, and we're on to our next obsession: eggs. Especially atop pulled pork and kimchi hash at Bad Egg in London, or scrambled in a bun at Egg Slut in LA.

BARTENDERS

Not always needed now that cocktails come by bike/van/in the post. Try Cocktail Courier in New York and Chicago, and Tipple Box or Shaken in the UK. At 30,000ft? Order the Carry On Cocktail Kit before you take off. Pig-flavoured everything (vodka,





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ESSAOUIRA

The Moroccan coastal town has always been a raggedy retreat but now, finally, it's shaken just a little of the dust off its babouches and is twirling its moustache most handsomely. By **Tara Stevens**

IKE SO MANY seaside towns,
Essaouira has something
reassuringly solid about it. This
tiny little place juts out into the
Atlantic like an island about to break
free. In fact, people here describe it as
not like Morocco at all, but rather a place
dancing to its own languid rhythm:
open-minded, free-spirited and curiously
separate from the rest of the country.

I first rolled up in Essaouira about five years ago, looking for a quick escape from the hustle of Marrakech, a couple of hours' drive inland. Here on the coast, the only crowds are of seagulls, whipping and turning above the harbour like the kite-surfers' sails that flock further down the broad, biscuit-coloured beach. The air, straight-off-the-ocean salty, is made headier by the smoky scent of fish rubbed in charmoula - a lemony mix of paprika, cumin, garlic and coriander – grilling on hot coals at the stalls around the harbour, with its jumble of blue-tailed fishing boats. Everything is blue here, from the cobalt trim of the window shutters and doorways that dot the Medina's narrow lanes, to the turquoise petits taxis that bob around the Bab Marrakech, one of several gateways into the Medina. And over the clamour of gulls, church bells toll every day at noon, underscoring the call to prayer.

Essaouira has opened its arms wide to different nationalities and religions ever since Sultan Sidi Mohamed ben Abdallah built his fortress here in the mid 18th century – the town's original name, Mogador, means 'small fort' – with the aim of opening Morocco to the rest of the world. He was successful, attracting major European and British consuls as well as establishing what became known as the Port of Timbuktu as the country's main commercial hub.

It was in part that libertine outlook that put the town on the hippie trail in the 1960s, and there are plenty of brightly embellished tales about Jimi Hendrix and Cat Stevens chilling out here. You would think the developers would have been quick to follow, but aside from an ailing Sofitel, the international names have yet to arrive.

ITS LIBERTINE OUTLOOK PUT THE TOWN ON THE HIPPIE TRAIL IN THE 1960S, WHEN HENDRIX CHILLED OUT HERE

The old town is thriving however, with bars, galleries and smart boutiques dotted through the three distinct districts wedged within its rampart walls: the Kasbah La Scala with its tangle of narrow alleyways; the teeming souks of the Medina; and the Mellah (the Jewish quarter), considered unsafe for foreigners when I first came, but now flourishing with a lively café culture among the shady plazas.

At the weekend, folk gather to brunch on *huevos rancheros* at **La Cantina** on the

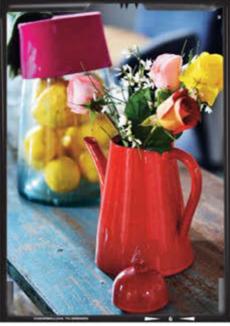
Mellah's Place Taraa, or stroll down the main Rue du Rif with a latte from Bruno at **Juice**, who came on holiday here two years ago and never left. 'There was no work in Biarritz,' he says, 'and I thought Essaouira was a good alternative. It's so laid-back and easy.' And sitting out in the sun with a tea glass of *nous-nous* (half espresso, half steamed milk) from one of the cafés on the Place Marché aux Grains, I see what he means.

This is a town made for pottering, for ambling, for idling – and a morning spent poking around its many galleries is très Souiri (as the locals are known). The naïf artists of the Joutia (the Sunday flea market) were first shown at Gallery Damgaard, opened in 1988 by Danish artist Frédéric Damgaard. For a few thousand dirhams you still can pick up one of Redouane Ouarzaz's Lego-bright artworks depicting grinning cats, camels and fish, or the intricate, psychedelic imaginings of Regragui Bouslai. Slimane Drissi's La Petite Galerie explores love – Arabic has more than 50 different words for the emotion and his work covers the whole gamut from hot-blooded passion to the misery of loss. And there's a brilliant collection at the new Institut Français with contemporary pieces by artists such as Mohamed Tabal, who turns the naïf style on its head by rendering it in black and white.

Essaouira's coming of age began with a trickle of newcomers that has been gaining momentum over the past few

SOMEWHERE FOR THE WEEKEND? ESSAOUIRA







➤ years. Among them is French artist Didier Spindler, who arrived seven years ago and owns two of the most eclectic places in town: Caravane Café, known for its killer rum punch, creative cooking and fire jugglers, and the five-room Dar Adul, filled with his vibrant paintings and sculptures, including a giant papiermâché fish hanging from the ceiling and a sequinned mannequin sitting at one of the tables. 'Essaouira reminds me of the way the Caribbean used to be,' says Spindler, who lived on St Barth's for 25 years. 'It's got a natural groove that's not sceney or fashionable.'

No less eye-catching is the clubby

One Up, the town's answer to Soho
House, which opened last June, attracting
a cool crowd of locals and expats
with its splashy drinks list and tapas
updated with Moroccan flavours, such
as delicately spiced squid cannelloni and
saffron-infused monkfish tagine. The
lavishly decorated bar and restaurant
occupy a 19th-century British Consulate
building, filled with Moroccan vintage
furniture, mirrored walls, tartan
armchairs, an orange-crate bar and
Vivienne Westwood wallpaper, all set to
the funkiest playlist in town.

Writers, musicians and artists have long been drawn to Essaouira, and this creativity has spun off into a disproportionate number of concept stores that showcase more contemporary Moroccan craftsmanship. Le Coin des Saveurs sells fun, striped kitchenware by Chaabi Chic, nattily packaged spices, and Fatima Arab's embroidered flour and couscous sacks turned into place mats. At Lalla

Izza, stock up on sexy black bottles of organic cosmetic and culinary argan oil, or buy chunky cheeseboards and saltand-pepper bowls hewn from walnut, apricot and olive woods by Patrick Poirier at the Galerie Az-Zahr. At Histoire de Filles, traditional design is given a modern spin, including Moroccan Touch's djellaba (the hooded cloaks) reimagined as soft, woollen wraps edged in silver thread, and bergamot-scented candles wrapped in hot-pink leather sleeves.

One of the best things to do though is to simply walk and empty your head – a friend told me you could walk down most of Africa from here along the never-ending beach – but a more do-able 20-minute stroll along the bay that cups Iles Purpuraires,

THE TOWN'S ANSWER TO SOHO HOUSE OPENED RECENTLY, WITH A SPLASHY DRINKS LIST AND TARTAN ARMCHAIRS

where the Romans manufactured an imperial purple dye from indigenous snail shells, takes you to **Ocean Vagabond**. Owned by Sebastian and Marie Deflandre, it was the first beach bar to open on these shores in 1996, starting life as a camel-hair tent serving salads and sandwiches then gradually evolving into the casually cool hotel it is today, with striped linens piled high on wooden furniture, where I sit eating sushi with a glass of Meknes rosé and watch the camels mooch past. Marie's something of a local celebrity after taking part in the

all-women Rallye Aïcha des Gazelles last year, finishing 19th out of 160 teams. 'But it's about skill, not speed,' she explains. 'We have to cross 1,200km of desert, with no GPS, over the course of a week in the most efficient way possible.' The finish of the rally here is the big event of the year, and the 25th-anniversary event (finishing on 4 April) is expected to be the biggest yet. Not that the town lacks parties. The Festival les Alizés in April draws world-class jazz and classical musicians, followed by the Gnaoua Festival in May, and heel-clacking flamenco at the Festival des Andalousies Atlantiques in October.

Don't bother with the big five-star hotels here: they're better in Marrakech and, besides, the smaller places better capture the town's bohemian charm. At Didier Spindler's maximalist **Dar Adul** (doubles from about £40), plump for the room with a giant sofa wrapped around an equally supersized fireplace. The cool Dar Maya (doubles from about £90) is all sandcoloured plaster and modern Moroccan minimalism with a hot tub on the roof; and for something more romantically rustic, Villa Maroc (doubles from about £65) is spread across two 18th-century merchants' houses, with rooms decorated with terracotta tiles and driftwood beams, tucked around several courtyards.

Back at the port, the day's catch is hawked from about 20 stands – stall no. 5 is the one locals head to for red mullet and baby squid grilled over hot coals. There's no shortage of seafood in the Medina either: hole-in-the-wall **Vagues Bleues** serves a fiendishly good lobster lasagne (lunchtime only); at **O'Bleu Mogador**

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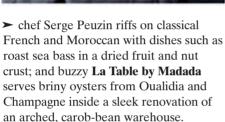
On the majestic islands of the Maldives, an exquisite tranquility shimmers in the air in this lush sanctuary brushed with dark emerald and yellow green hues. No matter where in the world you are, cosmopolitan Sydney or amidst the fascinating history of Xian, you'll always feel at home with smiles from the heart.

NATURE

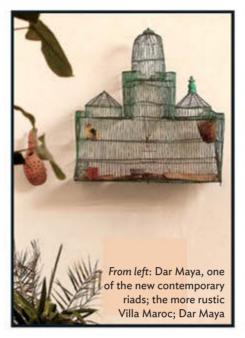


SOMEWHERE FOR THE WEEKEND? ESSAOUIRA





When the wind gets up, and it does, I escape to **Le Jardin des Douars** about 15 minutes out of town (there's a shuttle service from the Bab Marrakech). Modelled on the rammed earth citadels known as Kasbahs of the Atlas, the property is built up on a hill overlooking the Ksob River, its terraces filled with exotic shrubs and blooms; some say they are the best botanic gardens in the country. For the price of a fabulous lunch



ceviche of the day or a crab mille-feuille with preserved lemons and tomatoes –
stroll among them, use one of two pools (one for adults, another for kids) and hole up in the womb-like spa.

About 10 minutes from the centre of Essaouira, in Diabat, is **Auberge Tangaro** (doubles from about £50). Once the hotspot among chi-chi Moroccan families and expats, it was left to fall into ruin until its new owner Younès Ottmani – who as a child spent weekends here

THIS IS A TOWN MADE FOR POTTERING, FOR IDLING, FOR POKING AROUND ART GALLERIES



with his parents - loved it back to life a couple of years ago. A driftwood spa and funky sunset café have been added, but the rooms are still gloriously simple and unpretentious. On a recent stay here, with the rain howling down during an Atlantic storm, I happily dozed off in front of the wood fire. Later, I feasted on kefta tagine in a cinnamon-scented tomato sauce, the vast dining room lit only by candles and firelight, and felt like a medieval queen. Joining Ottmani for a glass of wine from the nearby Vall d'Argan winery, I heard Essaouira again compared to an island. 'It's like Ibiza was 30 years ago,' he said. 'We're changing slowly, but optimistically and creatively, and I think that's right for this place.'

THE INSIDETRACK



The co-owner of bar-restaurant
One Up, French-born Caroline Ruiz spent a decade in Paris before moving to Essaouira nine years ago

'When my husband and I want to relax we head for the **Baoussala** guest house. It's in the middle of the forest, only about 10 minutes from Essaouira, but one weekend here is like two weeks elsewhere. You can go just for lunch and a swim in the pool, but we like to stay over and use the Japanese hot

tub in the garden. Back in town I go to Spa Azur, where you can scrub away your cares in rosewater-infused clay, get an argan-oil massage and then chill on a rooftop with a verbena-ginger tea. For a drink, the courtyard at Heure Bleue has a splendid old colonial feeling, and its bar has plenty of sofas for cosying up if it gets windy. For dinner we like Elizir, which has a jazzy vibe, lots of small intimate dining rooms and 1970s decor. I love the gnocchi with fresh cheese and almond pesto, and the sea bass.

We're very into vintage design and there are a couple of well-kept secrets in the new town for second-hand

shopping. Bric-à-brac is good for furniture and one-offs from the 1950s right up until the present day. Articulator is great for 1970s kitsch. If you're after a true original, like a naïf sculpture of a foot with eyes and a nose, take a look around the artist's studios of the **Joutia** on a Sunday morning. It's fairly visceral, but brimming with brilliance. And the beach is a big part of the Souiri lifestyle - no visitor should come without at least trying to kite-surf. The first time I was terrified, but it's actually great fun. For one-on-one lessons Christophe Raynaud at Kite Adventure is your man.'

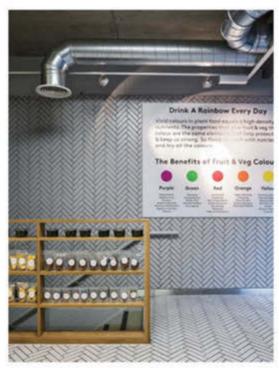
































Drink your way to five-a-day at these hip and healthy hangouts

Top row, from left: the first branch of Juice Served Here, in Los Angeles, is an all-white temple to raw foods; the group also has an outlet in Venice, California; fruity blends reign supreme at the zesty-coloured Juice Truck Café in Vancouver; Pressed Juices works with a nutritionist to create each of the juices available at its stores across Australia; fruit from organic farms in upstate New York is cold-pressed for juices at The Butcher's Daughter in Manhattan.

Middle row, from left: at Pressed Juices' South Yarra bar, fruit crates are refashioned as shelves, seats and lighting; industrial interiors at London's The Juice Well - the new café from the team behind La Bodega Negra; Juice Café at the Standard Spa Miami Beach suggests starting the day with a citrus juice to balance pH levels in the body; as well as Red, Green and Amber juices, SLA in Amsterdam serves organic wine; Pressed Juices in Australia also makes its own nut 'mylk' from filtered water, almonds, dates, vanilla beans and sea salt.

Bottom row, from left: in Los Angeles, the ticket booth at the Ace Hotel's 1920s theatre is home to Moon Juice; you can't miss The Juice Truck's neon-pink truck in Vancouver; a shot of cold-pressed wheatgrass is the fastest way to get a vitamin hit at Juice Baby on London's King's Road; pick up a green blend at Pressed Juicery, then click over to the Chalkboard, the California group's wellness blog featuring tips, recipes and fitness advice from Jamie Oliver and Kate Hudson; in Amsterdam, SLA's 'LAB' also hosts talks and workshops by health gurus.

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scene seem new. It made it seem hip. And as a pioneer in the new sharing economy, it made it youthful - and encouraged us all to travel differently, to 'live like a local'. When I had dinner with Brian Chesky, one of Airbnb's founders, last January in a clock tower above London's St Pancras station (rentable on Airbnb, of course), he told the story of how it began. Struggling to pay rent on their San Francisco apartment, Chesky and his flatmate Joe Gebbia put three airbeds in their living room, filled them with some delegates who were in town for a conference and threw in breakfast. With computer whizz Nathan Blecharczyk, the third founder, they built a website - and airbedandbreakfast.com was born. 'Airbnb is the worst idea that ever worked,' Chesky jokes, now that the company is worth \$10 billion. Today, some 30 million people have travelled with Airbnb, 20 million of those in the last year alone. Its success has spawned numerous hybrids and imitators. In 2009, One Fine Stay began rounding up some of the most exquisite townhouses and apartments in New York and London and glossed-up the experience with hotel-like service. Now, others are carving a niche in the market for families (Kid & Coe) and creative-types looking for high-design homes (Behomm, whose properties include a Victorian home in Cape Town, pictured). Here's the inside track. FIONA KERR





THE FAMILY-FRIENDLY FAVOURITE

KD & (DE

TOP LINE High-spec pads for children and their entourage WHO RENTS? It was launched in 2013 by Zoie Kingsbery Coe – who lives with her DJ husband and two kids between New York, London and Ibiza – and clients are much like Coe herself: families who haven't scaled back on travelling because they have children. Already there are actors, rock stars and politicians on the books. WHOSE HOUSES? Plenty of mobile, creative types. Many listings have little owner's bios next to snaps of toothy kids ('We have two beautiful girls and a Jack Russell dog called Bandito' or 'I love discovering new cafés, parks and museums with my son Leo') which adds a mi casa es su casa vibe.

WHERE? There are more than 500 houses in 135 destinations
– from a beach villa in Kerala to a ski chalet in Argentina as
well as plenty of stripped-wood-floored, straight-out-ofthe-Hay-catalogue apartments in Paris/New York/Amsterdam.
THE GOOD STUFF The by-families-for-families ethos means
all places come with trunks of toys, art supplies and DVDs, and
recommendations for the best restaurants with kids' menus.
Design is what really sets them apart – you might find a childsized table surrounded by miniature replica Eames chairs, and
bunting-festooned nurseries with teepees to hide in.

WHAT'S THE CATCH? In some key destinations the number of properties is light, so book early for school holidays.

FAVOURITE FINDS The quirky Torrent de les Flors apartment in Barcelona (top left), and Amsterdam's Scandi-styled Wouwermanstraat house (left).

THE FLASHIEST PLAYER

one fine Stay

TOP LINE Best for the risk-adverse and time-poor WHO RENTS? High-maintenance travellers who want all the private-house appeal of staying in a home with none of the hassle – each place is run like a micro-hotel with fresh linens, towels, check-in, hospital corners, the works. WHOSE HOUSES? The well-heeled and well-travelled (houses have to be available for at least three months a year). Hidden in the roughly 2,500 stays, there are homes of artists, opera singers and BAFTA winners. But, of course, that's all very discreet – both sides remain anonymous throughout.

WHERE? Currently only in London, New York, Paris and Los Angeles, but plans are afoot to expand in Europe and the USA – we heard rumours that Barcelona and Miami could be next.

THE GOOD STUFF This has made homestays slicker and easier: there's a reservations team, a concierge-on-call from the pre-loaded iPhone received on arrival, even The White Company smellies in the bathroom to swipe. Plus, the standards are high, so it's often like staying on the set of a World of Interiors shoot.

WHAT'S THE CATCH? It's not quite as good for nosy parkers: some rooms are sealed off with tamperproof tape, and how much storage space is out of bounds can vary widely, as can no-shoes rules and more. People with £3 million mews houses can be predictably precious. And prices are more akin to hotel levels – from £150 a night for a smart one-bedder running into thousands for an interior-designed townhouse.

FAVOURITE FINDS This clued-up Shoreditch loft space, *right*, in a former costume factory, owned by a writer with an eye for design.



PHOTOGRAPH: CATALINA PEREZ AND MARIA DANIELA QUIROS



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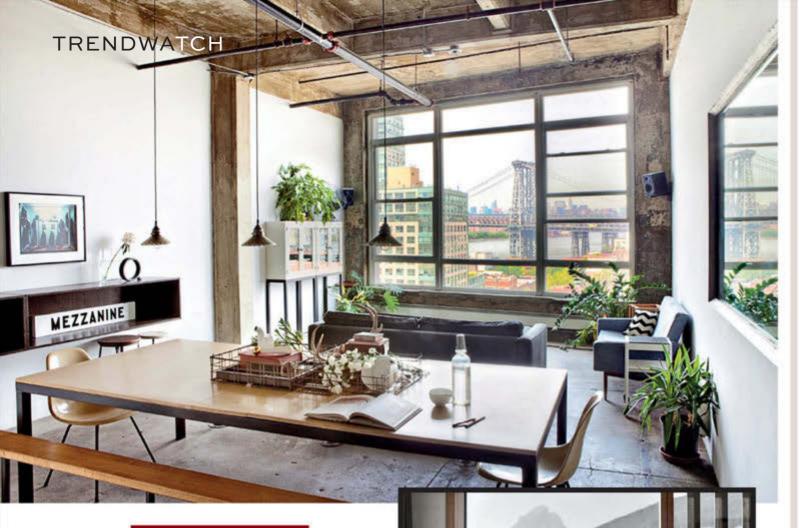




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THE CREATIVE CLUB

BEHOMM

TOP LINE Eye-catching homes to swap rent-free

WHO RENTS? Arty types with connections. This is an invite-only community open to designers and visual artists – although the list of 100 accepted professions includes art teacher and design PR, as well as graffiti artist and fashion editor. If they don't know an existing member, potential Behommers can contact the founders with their CV and pictures of their home to request membership.

WHOSE HOUSES? The same people who rent: this is old-school house-swapping where you have to list your place too. Aesthetic appeal, rather than size or expense, is the only criteria for homes – so there's everything from houseboats in Amsterdam to Czech castles. The founders are two Barcelona-based graphic designers, Eva Calduch and Agusti Juste, who say, 'Behomm is not for those who believe a diamond is more beautiful than a piece of wood with its grain.'

WHERE? There's currently around 1,400 homes in 53 different countries, with plenty of choice beyond the big cities: a fashion designer's colourful villa in Bali, a photographer's palm-thatched pad in Mexico, a painter's art-filled home in Stellenbosch, for example.

THE GOOD STUFF With Behomm's curated collection, it feels as if you're living in one of The Selby books. Plus, beyond the annual subscription fee (€95, after one-year's free trial), it's free to play swapsies.

WHAT'S THE CATCH? As this works as a straight exchange, the owners of your desired home have to want to stay at your place, and you'll need to coordinate on dates that suit both sides. Plus, there's a 10–20 per cent rejection rate on houses that don't meet Behomm's aesthetic standard – ouch.

FAVOURITE FINDS *From top*: a creative director's loft in Brooklyn; a Dolomites chalet; mid-century-modern retreat in Upstate New York.



BELMOND HOTEL SPLENDIDO, PORTOFINO

CAME HERE BECAUSE I WAS TOLD TO COME BY A FRIEND I TRUSTED. HE SAID ANTONIO MAKES A FABULOUS MARTINI. AND HE WAS RIGHT. HE INSISTED THAT AT DINNER I PUT MYSELF IN CORRADO'S HANDS AND TRUST HIS EVERY RECOMMENDATION. AND HE WAS RIGHT. HE TOLD ME TO SIT ON THE TERRACE **EVERY MORNING WITH MY ESPRESSO AND MY** NEWSPAPERS AND DREAM ABOUT THE DAY AHEAD. AND HE WAS RIGHT. BUT HE FORGOT TO TELL ME THE VIEW OF THE HARBOUR IS UTTERLY HYPNOTIC, AND THAT WHEN IN PORTOFINO I MUST DO MORE THAN DREAM.

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SOUTH AMERICA

Brazil, Iguassu Falls, Belmond Hotel das Cataratas
Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, Belmond Copacabana Palace
Peru, Cusco, Belmond Hotel Monasterio
Peru, Cusco, Belmond Palacio Nazarenas
Peru, Lima, Belmond Miraflores Park
Peru, Machu Picchu, Belmond Hiram Bingham train
Peru, Machu Picchu, Belmond Sanctuary Lodge
Peru, Sacred Valley, Belmond Hotel Rio Sagrado

AFRICA

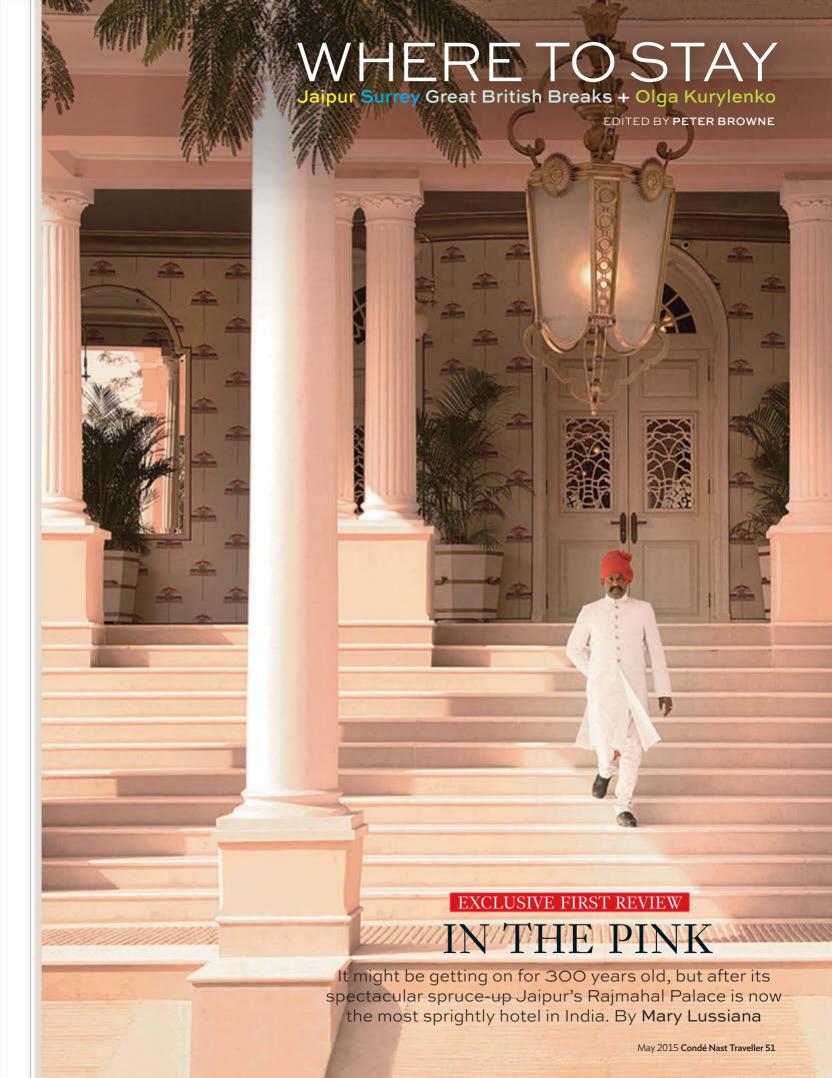
Botswana, Chobe National Park, **Belmond Savute Elephant Lodge**Botswana, Moremi Reserve, **Belmond Khwai River Lodge**Botswana, Okavango Delta, **Belmond Eagle Island Lodge**South Africa, Cape Town, **Belmond Mount Nelson Hotel**

ASIA

Cambodia, Siem Reap, Belmond La Résidence d'Angkor
Indonesia, Bali, Belmond Jimbaran Puri
Laos, Luang Prabang, Belmond La Résidence Phou Vao
Myanmar, Belmond Orcaella river cruises
Myanmar, Belmond Road to Mandalay river cruises
Myanmar, Yangon, Belmond Governor's Residence
Thailand, Koh Samui, Belmond Napasai
Southeast Asia departures, Eastern & Oriental Express train



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HIS IS A BEAUTIFUL MONTH
in Rajasthan. The skies are blue,
the flowers are beginning to
bloom, birds sing and the days
are clear and cool,' wrote Gayatri
Devi in her memoirs, A Princess Remembers.
Beauty was something she was renowned
for, as was the glamour she brought to
the royal family of Jaipur when she married
Sawai Man 'Jai' Singh, the dashing, poloplaying Maharajah of Jaipur in 1940,
becoming his third and favourite Maharani.

The couple lived for many years in the Rajmahal Palace in Jaipur, originally built in 1729 as a pleasure pavilion, far from the city, where peacocks strutted on green lawns and cooling breezes swept through sunlit spaces. In 1821 it was loaned to the British Resident Political Officer and it remained in British hands until independence in 1947. In an attempt to introduce a bit of Home Counties familiarity to the dusty subcontinent, the garden was transformed by herbaceous borders and tiered hedges; in addition, the original domed pavilion was enveloped by a two-storey, colonial-style building.

After independence, Rajmahal was returned to Jaipur's royal family and in 1957 they adopted it as a private residence, having previously lived at Rambagh Palace, which the financially astute Jai turned into the first palace hotel in India. 'It was much smaller than Rambagh, but when the workmen had finished it had charm and character and a pleasantly informal atmosphere,' wrote Devi. Here they entertained lavishly with long lunches on the lawns and suppers at the Lalique glass dining table. Jackie Kennedy, Lord Mountbatten and the Queen were all guests, mixing duties of state with polo matches and tiger-hunting in Ranthambor.

The pink city of Jaipur may now nudge up against the Palace's 10 acres of walled gardens, but when its doors opened as the Suján Rajmahal Palace in February this year, the skies were indeed blue and the days clear and cool. It was as if nothing had changed and Jackie Kennedy could, at any moment, walk down the marble staircase to enjoy a pineapple and cardamom Martini in the Polo Bar where Jai's silver trophies decorate the shelves.

It has taken a great deal of work and love to restore the palace's faded charms, but the royal family knew just where to look for help: Adil Ahmad, an acclaimed interior

Previous page: the entrance to Suján Rajmahal Palace. This page, and overleaf: designer Adil Ahmad's new interiors flaunt a dazzling palette of bold turquoise and bright pink

Private paradise

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WHERE TO STAY



NORMAN PARKINSON'S PHOTOGRAPHS OF INDIA FOR VOGUE INSPIRED THE BRIGHT COLOURS OF THE PALACE'S BREAKFAST-ROOM WALLPAPER

➤ designer and a friend of Rajmata Padmini Devi, the wife of Jai's late son, who succeeded him as Maharajah, and who had come to live in the palace as a young bride.

The present Maharajah, a student at Millfield, is a polo player like his great grandfather Jai, and it was with him in mind that Ahmad set to work creating a contemporary palace, while taking care to reference traditional Mogul motifs and family history for the 46 wallpapers he designed. Ahmad used existing family furniture, portraits and photographs, and sourced the beaten silver vases and marble bottles for the bathrooms filled with rose and jasmine. He put symmetry back into the building where it had lost it,

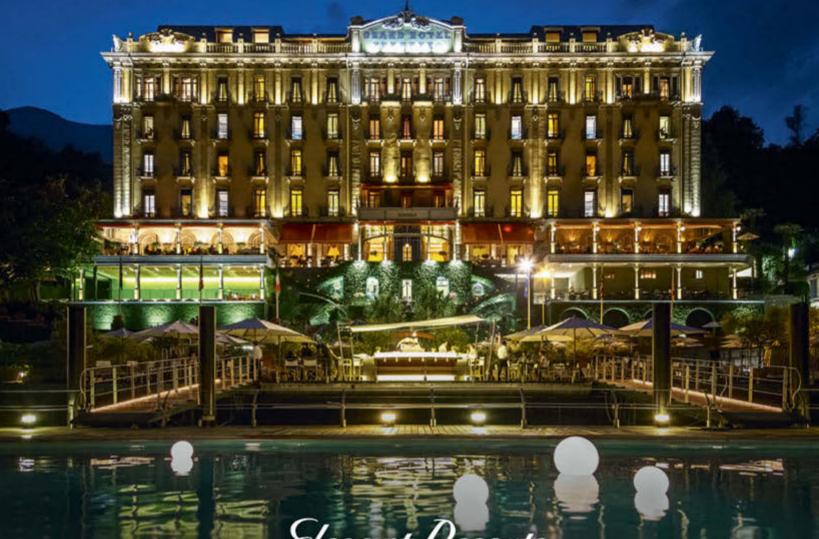
and referenced the latticework in the famous Palace of Winds on the upper corridor windows. He designed the china and the chairs with the characteristic peacock arches which are echoed on the wallpaper of the pink-on-pink breakfast room, inspired by Norman Parkinson's photographs of India for *Vogue*. Ahmad turned his back on royal red, choosing instead bold turquoises and bright pinks to create informality within a regal setting.

The reimagined palace has 14 suites and rooms, including two extremely smart apartments, each with a chauffeur and butler on call. It serves breakfasts of stuffed paratha, lunches of Jaipur *thali* on the lawns and suppers of local river sole

cooked in mustard oil and fenugreek amid gilded splendour. The staff are always smiling, the swimming pool awaits, all is well with the world. Which could be because it has been entrusted to Jaisal Singh, another friend of the family and the founder of Suján, a cluster of highly polished safari camps, and a man who innately understands quality. Whatever the reason, there is no doubt that this is a thrilling place to stay.

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Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Italy

SALLY SHALAM'S GREAT BRITISH BREAKS

This month our happy wanderer steps out of the rat race and settles in a simple shack. What could possibly be better in spring?

o season speaks of secret hideaways like spring. It's a time to reconnect with nature in remote boltholes created on private land by inspired individuals for townies to kick back in. There may be no phone signal or iPod dock – these places are about what *isn't* laid on – but with sweet bathrooms and woodburning stoves, they brook no compromise on style.

ABERDEENSHIRE

The Barley Bothy (www.canopyandstars. co.uk; from £85 per night, sleeps two) is a divine tin shack bejewelled with vintage finds by former event rider Jane Foad. It is on the farm she shares with husband James and two small sons. Jane wants to showcase the beauty of Aberdeenshire, so children can run free and parents can 'just stop, look out of the window, and be'. That said, all the essentials are nearby: Formartine's on the Haddo Estate has a café, food hall and woodland to play in, as well as the main house; nearby in Huntly, Whiskies of Scotland will sell you something to savour back at base amid the lush, green barley fields.

DEVON

Spring seemed some way off as wind howled through a valley on Dartmoor and I curled up beside a roaring stove at Out of the Valley (www.canopyandstars.co.uk; from £108 per night, sleeps two). Furniture designer Rupert McKelvie and his textile-aficionado mother Lilly welcome guests to an alluring cabin clad in burnt cedar (a Japanese technique known as shou-sugi-ban) and kitted out in pale beech and oak. It has solar power and poetry books, a basket of fruit and fresh eggs and good china, and the best bed I've slept in so far this year. Wooded hillside and undulating moor were my neighbours, the McKelvies' farmhouse out of sight. Soon the valley will be carpeted in bluebells and pink campion, with star-gazing and wild



Haddo Honse

swimming in the River Teign on the menu. Fringe benefits include antipasti and wood-fired pizzas at **The Horse**, a 10-minute drive down rabbit-hole roads, in the market town of Moretonhampstead where you will also find French furniture and oils at **Rue des Fontenelles** and a wonderful shoemaker, **Green Shoes**, whose bespoke Dartmoor Boot is now top of my shopping list.

CEREDIGION

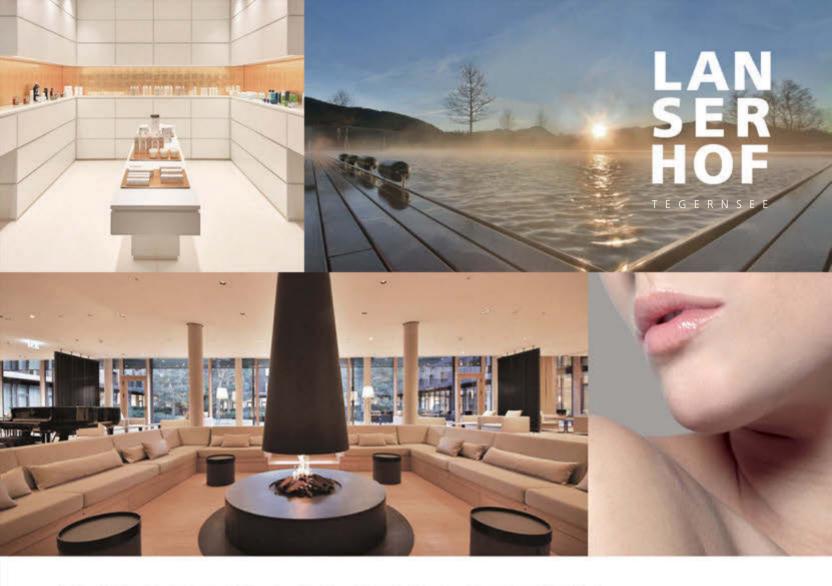
Next time I find myself on the empty roads of western Wales, I shall seek out Ty Mamgu (www.sheepskinlife.com; £350 for three nights, sleeps two). This retro-chic shack, on a 62-acre organic farm owned by Amanda Edwards, promises nothing more than the hooting of owls after dark, unless you feel like striking up the piano, thoughtfully provided in the open-plan living space. Deserted beaches are just a few miles away, as is The Daffodil Inn at Penrhiwllan, but I'd stock up en route with smoked trout from **Rhydlewis Smokery** off the A487 to augment laverbread and Caws Cenarth cheese, which Amanda sells in the tiny shop on her farm. Because once I really am in the middle of nowhere, it can be very hard to leave. n



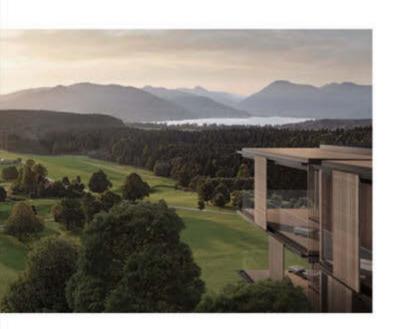




Barley Bothy



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BED-HOPPING WITH OLGA KURYLENKO

The Ukrainian-born Bond girl, who stars in Russell Crowe's directorial debut, talks to Francesca Babb



SOHO BEACH HOUSE,

MIAMI

'I was filming Magic City in Miami for two years, and I practically lived here. My apartment was right next door, so I would come for breakfast, lunch, dinner, to use their private beach... I love the decor of the rooms, they're so eclectic.' www.sohobeachhouse.com. Doubles from about £210



CHILTERN FIREHOUSE,

LONDON

'Whoever did the decoration here did a good job because it's beautiful, although the funny thing is, it doesn't feel like London at all. It's street, but with a tropical vibe, and then a bit of country-house, too. So maybe don't go here if you're after a typical English hotel.' www.chilternfirehouse.com. Doubles from £480



'I HAVE AN APARTMENT IN PARIS, BUT I PREFERTHE GEORGE V – IT'S SO GRAND, AND THE SPA IS AMAZING'

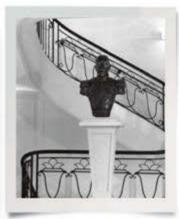


WALDORF ASTORIA,

CHICAGO

'I went to Chicago for a meeting and stayed here, in the most beautiful suite. It was like an apartment, so elegant and stylish. The hotel also has a great restaurant. I was amazed there were so many interesting pieces of art everywhere.' www. waldorfastoriachicagohotel.com. Doubles from about £245

Olga Kurylenko stars in 'The Water Diviner', in cinemas now



FOUR SEASONS HOTEL GEORGE V, PARIS

'It's so grand and French and the spa is amazing. Even if I don't stay here, I'll make sure I go for a treatment. Le Cinq does wonderful food, and La Galerie is perfect for a cup of tea with a friend. I have an apartment in Paris, but I'd rather stay at the George V.' www.fourseasons.com/paris. Doubles from about £730



THE BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL, LOS ANGELES

'Staying here just feels like a real escape. I don't see palm trees very often, and the hotel is in the middle of vegetation – plants everywhere! You feel like you're outside the city, and there are really nice cabanas to rent, which is the cosiest thing.' www. dorchestercollection.com. Doubles from about £310

PHOTOGRAPHS. JULIEN CAPMEIL; TIM CLINCH; LISA LINDER; DAVID SLIJPER/TRUNK ARCHIVE

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THE WEEKENDER

BEL & THE DRAGON CHURT, SURREY

WHAT IS IT? A creaky little late19th-century coaching inn between
Farnham and Haslemere. There are half
a dozen Bel & the Dragons scattered
across Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire
– owner Joel Cadbury has got the
London stockbroker belt cinched up
tight. A new addition to the portfolio,
in Kingsclere, is due to open shortly.

unassuming pub-with-rooms-and-restaurant comes with some great stories, starting with its name. Bel & the Dragon sounds like an obscure indie band. In fact, the moniker is derived from a Bible story. Literary boffins say it's the first 'locked-room mystery' – the kind, that is, where a crime is committed in a place that seemingly no intruder could have entered or exited. How appropriate, then, that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle lived just

around the corner. So pack a Bible that includes the deuterocanonical Old Testament (you know – the bits that usually get left out) and a copy of *The Valley of Fear*, the fourth Sherlock Holmes novel and a locked-room classic.

SLEEP There are 14 bedrooms, none of them huge, but cheerfully designed by Nicola Harding, with great bathrooms. The style is a mash-up of country-house (winged armchairs, tartan blankets) and Scandi-distressed (side tables in bleached ash), with retro flourishes.

EAT Definitely the big draw. The dining room is unpretentious but attractive, with wildflowers in jam jars on the tables; the service is warm and enthusiastic. The kitchen is overseen by Ronnie Kimbugwe, previously with Gordon Ramsay at Claridge's, and dishes up the

sort of solid but subtly innovative British stuff that would win *MasterChef*: seared Scottish scallops with smoked pancetta and curried cauliflower; roasted-squash-and-quinoa salad with clementines and candied walnuts; Jack O'Shea rib of beef on the bone with violet artichokes and roasted garlic. There's a superb wine list, too, with a remarkably modest mark-up (around 50 per cent). Truly impressive.

who goes there? Golfers (there are two public courses nearby), ramblers (Churt is near the intersection of several well-loved trails), shooters (some of the rooms have gun safes) and families (who perhaps prefer not to think too much about the gun safes and focus instead on the outdoor pizza oven). It's also dog-friendly and ageing-celebrity-friendly – your correspondent petted some adorable pooches in the bar, and only narrowly missed bumping into Noel Edmonds and Bruce Forsyth.

WE LIKE The pistachios in the bar, sourced by manager Mike Procopakis from his home town in Greece.

WE DON'T LIKE The fact that the rooms are named after Jane Austen characters. She was born and died in Hampshire, not Surrey. Why not use the names of Conan Doyle characters?

CONTACT +44 1428 605799; www.belandthedragon.co.uk. Doubles from £115 STEVE KING



WHILE YOU'RE HERE

Get some fresh air. There are several National Trust trails starting more or less at the doorstep – **Hindhead Commons** and the **Devil's Punchbowl** are designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



There's more than one type of seahorse in the Cayman Islands.



BRITISH AIRWAYS

Natural HIGH

The original famed VIVAMAYR health resort is taking its winning 'medical health cure' concept further into the Austrian mountains, to a stunning second centre: VIVAMAYR Altaussee. Come for a taste of the high life

t's a bit like the six degrees of separation theory: everyone knows someone who's been to VIVAMAYR, and comes back glowing, full of energy and evangelical about the whole experience. The Austrian health resort, with its idyllic location in the village of Maria Wörth, near Klagenfurt, on the picturesque shores of Lake Wörthersee, has no shortage of fans — many of them hard-working celebrities feeling burnt out. They return again and again for the unique combination of medical expertise, detoxification and wellbeing treatments. A healthy outdoor lifestyle in a blissful natural setting leaves visitors feeling truly refreshed. If you're in need of a health re-boot, it doesn't get much better.

From April 2015, those who long to visit VIVAMAYR have a tricky decision on their hands. How to choose between the original Maria Wörth property (now at its best after state-of-the-art refurbishment) and the brand-new VIVAMAYR Altaussee? The latter, in the pristine Salzkammergut region, boasts just as much fresh air and crystalline water – key ingredients for invigoration.

What's more, VIVAMAYR Altaussee offers the same highly effective wellness formula as the Maria Wörth property, but with an added emphasis on the healing properties of mineral-rich waters - so abundant in this part of Austria. It is, after all, a stone's throw from Salzburg, a town famed for its salt mines. The powerful blend of mineral salts in the Altaussee make this an ideal second location for VIVAMAYR. Under the guidance of lead clinicians Dr Harald Stossier and Dr Fegerl, a highly trained medical staff prescribes a bespoke programme for each patient, combining traditional and modern naturopathic therapies with the latest sophisticated diagnostic tests. Choose from a variety of treatments - from tailored mineral-salt procedures to oxygen therapy - designed to treat respiratory problems, skin ailments, arthritis, rheumatism, fibromyalgia and more. Why not combine the in-resort treatments with a range of mountain and aquatic activities in the clinic's stunning alpine surroundings? Throw in a tailored nutrition regime and it's impossible not to come back transformed and energized. The vast medical department ensures clients leave with the understanding and skills to enable them to achieve long-term improvements back in the real world.

All this in a tranquil glass and wood building that both benefits from and enhances the mountain scenery. VIVAMAYR is looking remarkably sprightly for an institution that's nearly 100 years old. It must be something in the water.

Visit vivamayr.com for more information







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I PRESENTTO YOU...

ANA BEATRIZ BARROS

The Brazilian model has strutted her stuff for Victoria's Secret, Dior and Versace

ON HOTELS

'I love it when guests are greeted in a warm, familiar way. It is the little things that make you want to come back. Good service is really important to me, and I trust the Four Seasons in any part of the world. The hotels have fantastic food, lovely rooms, great spas, and the bed linen is beautiful. The Fasano in Rio, top right, is also a favourite; it has the most amazing rooftop pool with breathtaking views. The Bulgari in Milan always make me feel at home, and serves the best Sunday brunch. And in Amsterdam The Dylan, right, is in a perfect location on the canal. I'm also a fan of The Connaught in London; it is so English.'

ON SHOPS

'In São Paulo I go to Lilly Sarti and Raia de Goeye for fashion, and Lenny Niemeyer for swimwear. I like pieces that stand the test of time; I've a pair of leather trousers from Helmut Lang that are still going after 10 years and a Balmain jacket too. The markets in Marrakech are wonderful: the stalls are different every time you return. I also like Micasa in Brazil, below, for interiors, and B&B Italia. My favourite jewellers are Ana Khouri and Delfina Delettrez.'

ON HEALTH

'Steigenberger Frankfurt Hof has one of the best spas I have experienced. I also adore Lapinha in Brazil. It is on an old farm in the south, is totally organic and a very spiritual place. You eat well, have plenty of massages and are educated on how to live as healthily as possible. When I'm in London I always have someone from mobile salon InParlour come to give me treatments.'



ON TRAVELS

'Growing up in Brazil, where people feel very confident about their bodies, helped me enormously in my job as a model. I learnt a lot from living in New York for nearly 15 years and loved the nightlife. Now I'm really enjoying London, where I moved only six months ago; it seems a lot quieter than New York and somewhere

I'd like to raise children. Cairo is an inspiring place for its history and culture and is unlike anywhere else I have lived before. But Greece has to be one of my favourite countries. I love the islands, food, scenery and, of course, the water.'

ON RESTAURANTS

'I tend to eat out a lot in neighbourhood restaurants. In São Paulo Rodeio is my regular haunt, followed by a drink at Bar Número. I always go to Zuma and Cipriani in New York, and in London I visit Macellaio, La Bodega Negra and Chiltern Firehouse.'

ALL ABOUT THAT BASE:



1973 printed canvas, £300, **Valentino** (www.net-a-porter.com)



Floral print, £365, **Dolce & Gabbana** (www.net-a-porter.com)



Neon print, £118, **Kenzo** (www.farfetch.com)



Leopard print, £495, **Christian Louboutin** (www.christianlouboutin.com)



ESPADRILLES HAVETHEIR MOMENT IN THE SUN



Embroidered cotton, £165, Tory **Burch** (www.net-a-porter.com)



Monochrome print, £291, Proenza **Schouler** (www.farfetch.com)



Bird print, £305, Fendi (www.matchesfashion.com)



Ecru linen, £110, Heidi Klein (www.heidiklein.com)

STYLE FILE

What's your biggest holiday indulgence?

A nice glass of red wine.



What is your beauty routine before a flight?

I really like to start a flight fresh, with no make-up on at all. If for any reason I'm rushing to catch a plane from a work event, I always make sure my skincare products are in my handbag. Then the first thing I do when they take the fasten-your-seatbelt sign off is run into the bathroom.

Do you do anything extra to get your body beach-ready?

I like to stay fit all year round, largely because I'm diabetic and staying healthy is part of managing my diabetes. I'm not obsessed with it but I exercise about three times a week. sometimes more. I do a lot of cardio to get my heart pumping, and light weights.

Does your regime change if you're getting ready for a red-carpet event?

Chanel Sublimage La Crème Yeux works as a fantastic base moisturiser under the rest of my make-up, and helps keep skin really hydrated.



PHOTOGRAPH: RUVEN AFANADOR/CORBIS OUTLINE

BEAUTY KIT: HALLE BERRY

Oscar winner Halle Berry, star of new sci-fi series 'Extant', tells Tabitha Joyce about her feel-good finds

Where is your favourite spa?

I swear by Olga Northrup at the Kinara Spa in Los Angeles - her facials are truly amazing. And the Red Carpet Facial Kit works wonders if I'm away from home. If I travel somewhere and I haven't got it with me, I get straight on the phone to have it sent out to me - I can't live without it.



Mixed Chicks make really great products for women with curly hair - I don't use anything else. When I want to keep my hair wavy I use the leave-in conditioner; to wear it straight I just wash it out with the regular conditioner.



I think that women always look better, no matter what age they are, when their skin is a little dewy and not too powdery. So after I've done my make-up, I spray my face with Australian brand Jurlique's Rosewater and let that sink in. Even if I don't have any make-up on it's really refreshing. It makes my skin glow.



Do you have a particular nail colour you wear on holiday?

I sometimes get manicures if I'm going away but a lot of the time I do my own nails based on what I'm wearing, or for a movie role, so my nail colour is always changing. For a simple natural look, I like Revlon's All or Nothing.

What fragrance do you wear?

One that I actually created myself called Halle. I thought it would be cheesy but I love it. I got to construct the mix of scents I'd want to wear, so it really is my own creation.

Do you have any tips for keeping up appearances after a long-haul journey?

When I land I like to put on a little base colour: Revlon Colorstay foundation is great.



From top left: Cleansing Gel, about £30, **Kinara** (www.kinaraspa.com); Sublimage La Crème Yeux, £125, Chanel (www.chanel.com); Rosewater, £21.50, Jurlique (www.spacenk.com); Colorstay foundation, £12.99; Colorstay Gel Envy, £7.99 each, both **Revlon** (www.boots. com); leave-in conditioner, about £10, Mixed Chicks (www.mixedchicks.com). Halle Berry is a Revlon Global Ambassador



MIXED CHICKS





Rome ring in yellow gold, £1,500; New York ring in yellow gold, rubies, sapphires and diamonds, £2,300, both **Zara Simon** (www.zarasimon.com)





Jewellers are thinking big but designing small, conjuring tiny urban skylines out of gems, says **Jessica Diamond**

Sadabad ring in gold, silver, diamonds and rock crystal, POA, Sevan Biçakçi (www.sevanbicakci. com). Emerald City ring in yellow gold, enamel, diamonds and Gemfields emeralds, POA, Theo Fennell (www.theofennell.com). Palais Emeraude ring in yellow gold and diamonds, £13,560, Sophie Bille Brahe at Dover Street Market (www.sophiebillebrahe.com)

We have an enduring fascination with the miniscule – or certainly the reduction of the epic into a smaller condensed space. Look at the bonsai tree, or the ship in a bottle, or the crazy people who write the Lord's Prayer on a grain of rice.

Jewellery also channels superb skill into a narrow corridor of expression, the final pieces often inversely proportionate to the number of man-hours it took to create them. Some jewellers have taken these endeavours one step further, drawing inspiration from great landscapes and then replicating them in gem form. The urban

jungle is a recurring theme, shrunk into spaces no bigger than the width of a finger. Different techniques are employed by different designers to achieve this Lilliputian scene. **Zara Martin** chose key landmarks from five cities for a project that took more than a year to complete. Most successful are her London and New York rings. A black cab, the London Eye, Big Ben, Tower Bridge and St Paul's Cathedral are all (amazingly) squeezed into the former; the Chrysler Building, a band of skyscrapers, and the stars and stripes in the latter. German jeweller **Wempe** has pursued a more symbolic representation; its NY ring

has a swathe of green and blue gemstones (Central Park), surrounded by a glittering diamond Manhattan skyline. **Sophie Bille Brahe** has opted for a more imaginary scene, her gold-double-

finger ring giving ample room for a part-fairytale, part-space-age metropolis. And **Theo Fennell** has looked to the literary vista of L Frank Baum's *The Emerald City of Oz* – a tiny enamel painting adorning the side of a one-off ring, created with brushes no thicker than a hair. **Jo Hayes Ward** is abstract in her approach; her Cushion Structural ring depicts a hillside city, pixellated in textured gold. But most extraordinary of all is the work of **Sevan Biçakçi**. His rings are miniature homages to Istanbul, where he has honed his skills for more than four decades; he began his training at the age of 12. Hagia Sophia's numerous cupolas are created using the secretive intaglio reverse-carving technique, and the grand structure is miniaturised under a rock-crystal dome.











MAN ON A MISSION

Dodging pirates and oil rigs, Justin Packshaw of fashion label De Roemer jet-skis the Nigerian coastline

in on a sandbank half a mile off the coast of Nigeria. My jet ski has broken down and the Nigerian navy gunboat that's escorting us has run aground on this uncharted strip of sand. It's the end of a very long couple of days and there's a big storm rapidly heading towards us. Oh, and we're surrounded by pirates. I'm starting to wonder if this latest adventure of mine really was such a good idea.

I got into this predicament because my good friend Sir Og Amazu, a successful Nigerian businessman and philanthropist, told me he wanted to come up with a suitable way to launch Challenge 100, a charitable organisation he had set up with his wife, Lady Joy, to fund 100 philanthropic projects around the world. Knowing that Og couldn't swim, I had suggested we jet-ski from Cameroon to Benin via the length of the Nigerian coastline. Madly or bravely, he thought it was a terrific idea.

And so now we're here on this sandbank in the dark, being lashed by the worst storm to hit Nigeria for years. Having been a soldier and gone to war, my first instinct is to jump on our one working jet ski – mine having started to sink earlier in slapstick fashion – and head for land. But our Navy escort tells me, in no uncertain terms, that we would have a dust-up with pirates before we got to the coast, so we decide to tough it out.

Mercifully, Og has learned to swim by this point, and we have both become pretty handy on our steeds after practice sessions around the Isle of Wight in mid-December – a somewhat different prospect to the Gulf of Guinea. The Nigerian coastline is very beautiful, with tropical fauna tumbling down to miles of empty white beaches, but look the other way, out to sea, and it's like a scene from Mad Max, with thousands of tankers at anchor and hundreds of oil rigs with gas

flames spouting from high cranes. Jet-skiing through this is surreal and feels totally unpredictable – and downright dangerous.

Our powerful machines are capable of reaching 50mph. In open water, with tricky currents, steering one is not dissimilar to riding a mechanical bucking bronco. You're constantly shifting your weight as you look for a route through the waves. Your thighs get rubbed raw, and your skin is scorched by the fierce sun. Imagine doing that for 800km.

As the storm blows through, leaving us all feeling rather lucky to be alive, Og proves his weight in gold. At 3am, while sitting on our beached gunboat on a pile of supplies, surrounded by guns and ammunition, he suddenly appears with a bottle of Krug, followed by a Château Palmer 1972, to lift our battered spirits. He's the best packer of kit I have ever known.

To our relief the tide comes up in the morning and we're able to set off again. Our mechanic, Monday, repairs my jet ski, and we cover the final 160km on the inland waterways to the west of Lagos. The water is flat and full of life. Fishermen work from their little villages. Beautiful birds fly overhead. We ride the jet skis hard and fast, dancing in and out of each other's wake, lifted by the thought that our epic adventure is nearly at an end, and satisfied that Challenge 100 has been properly set in motion. www.challenge100.com



DOWNLOAD THIS 'Jet Ski'. From their 1996 album *Reject All American*, riot grrrl pioneers Bikini Kill's 'Jet Ski' features relentless guitar and hollered lyrics that should offer perfect motivation for those battling a fierce swell.

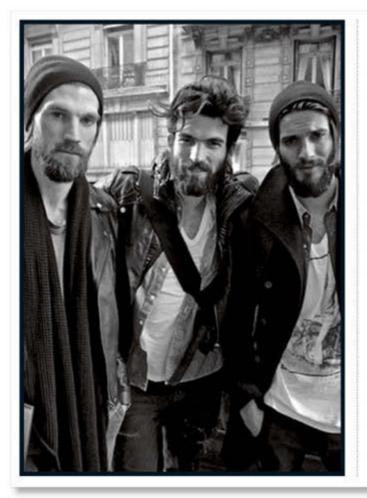
READ THIS Americanah. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's brilliant novel looks at her home country through the eyes of a returning expatriate. It is essential reading for anyone wanting to get a sense of modern Nigeria.

GET THE LOOK: SPIKE LEE

Whether you're strolling along the sidewalks of Brooklyn or Bude this summer, you need to do the right thing



From top left: shorts, £90, **Hartford** (www.mrporter.com); Air Max 93 trainers, £100, **Nike** (www.selfridges.com); Brooklyn Dodgers Jersey, £180 (www.fansedge.com); G-Shock Watch, £180, **Casio** (www.casioonline.co.uk)



DAVID'S POSTCARD FROM... THE MARAIS

The four boutiques sit side-by-side. Each sells only black coats. They're technical pieces, galvanised, the kind of thing you can imagine a motorbike assassin from the future wearing. The shops are like galleries: the walls



are painted white, the fittings are sparse, the coats are hung with the deliberation of a masterwork. I'm in the Marais, obviously. The Japanese are reverent about their togs, and everything about clothes is serious in Milan (not least, of course, the money), but nowhere are they intellectualised like they are in Paris's 3rd arrondissement, where an appositely placed pocket is as likely to be a comment on the use-value of commodities as it is somewhere to put your purse.

Even so, the Rue de Poitou feels even more fashion than usual. Five minutes of pootling around my hotel – the Petit Moulin, with its very Marais Christian Lacroix interiors – and I realise that the men's fashion shows are on. Somehow, years ago, without ever really questioning how it had come about, I found myself part of the catwalk caravan with its biannual stop-off in Paris. Back then we spent a lot of time in the Marais being fitted for this and measured for that. Ten years ago we were all pretty scrappy with our unkempt hair, sagging jeans, and party-weary insouciance. As with so many things, the whole thing seems to have been revolutionised in the last decade. The boys now are runway-ready from the get-go. Three of them walk past me like a unit of fashion-forward Navy Seals, all hair and teeth and professional polish. The world moves inexorably on to a future that is sleek, considered, aesthetic. The Marais, it seems, is winning.



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NATURAL M ARVE L

Make your visit to the Chelsea Flower Show a truly iconic affair. Champagne Laurent-Perrier's Cuvée Rosé: a quintessential French rosé. Chatsworth and The Dorchester: two quintessential English roses. Bring them all together in the form of a Chelsea Flower Show experience and what do you get? A truly beautiful relationship.

PHOTOGRAPHY: THOMAS ROHDE

ith a heritage of over 200 years' producing France's finest champagnes, Laurent-Perrier is no stranger to creating natural marvels. Founded in 1812, based in the heart of Champagne, Laurent-Perrier is recognised as one of the foremost brands in the region, thanks to its dedication to honouring traditional values; a respect for nature; a passion for quality, and its strong,





lasting relationships among the people who drive the company – both inside and outside the House.

Cross the Channel and the same deep-rooted values – along with a pioneering spirit and a shared pride in family ownership being passed from generation to generation – can be found at Chatsworth, the historic home and glorious estate of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, set in the heart of Derbyshire's Peak District. Not only home to the Devonshire Collection, one of Europe's most significant art collections, this famous residence also boasts one of Britain's most beautiful landscapes. This year, for the first time, Laurent-Perrier will be exhibiting at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in collaboration with Chatsworth.

For Chatsworth, it will be its first ever appearance; for Laurent-Perrier, it will be the 17th year in a row. And what a 17 years – with three previous Best in Shows in 2003, 2008 and 2014; 13 gold medals and two silver gilts, there seems to be no stopping the Champagne House's success. Indeed, this year's Show Garden promises to be as colourful, inspiring and classic as ever, under the artistic direction of award-winning designer Dan Pearson – an internationally renowned landscape and garden designer who trained at the RHS Gardens' Wisley and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and who has already designed five award-winning Chelsea Flower Show gardens.

AWE INSPIRING

And this one is set to be Pearson's best yet. Reflecting Laurent-Perrier and Chatsworth's shared heritage in glorious landscaping and nature, the garden offers an awe-inspiring experience for all. A beautiful representation of a small, less trodden, part of the 105-acre Chatsworth Garden that Pearson will be redesigning in 2016 – the Ornamental Trout Stream and Paxton's Rockery – it is simultaneously designed to reflect the lightness, freshness and delicacy of the 200-year old family owned Champagne House's most famous production, its Cuvée Rosé. In line with Pearson's passion for naturalism and the wilder side of gardening, features include an ornamental woodland; a water feature gracefully winding from dramatic rock stack to still, moon-gazing pool; stepping stones for



guests to wander across; glades fringed with plants displaying a refreshing spectrum of green, white and yellow punctuated with accents of stronger colours; flowering shrubs – many sourced from Chatsworth itself, including azaleas and rhododendrons – creating an ornamental counterpoint to native trees; and finally seedling oaks to highlight regeneration and larger trees imbuing a sense of maturity. In essence, it is a garden intended to capture the united elegance, creativity and pioneering spirit of the wonderful Anglo-French partnership of Laurent-Perrier and Chatsworth – a 21st-century Entente Cordiale. And for the Triple Entente? What better, after you've marvelled and meandered around the garden to your heart's content, than to enjoy a glass or two of the designer's inspiration at London's other great classic, The Dorchester, Park Lane.

DREAM MAKERS

Once again The Dorchester is offering Condé Nast Traveller readers the unique treat of a one or two-night stay on May 20 or May 21 that includes two tickets to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show on Thursday May 21. Enjoy a complimentary bottle of Champagne Laurent-Perrier Cuvée Rosé in your suite on arrival; take in the full spectrum of the show, culminating in the Laurent-Perrier Chatsworth Garden; indulge in a limited edition Chelsea Flower Show Afternoon Tea in The Promenade, surrounded by decorations by the hotel's talented designer florist, Philip Hammond; then snuggle up in one of its fabulous suites and dream of forest glades and tumbling waterfalls and streams of flowing Laurent-Perrier Cuvée Rosé. Well, isn't that what dreams are made of?

This year, for the first time, Laurent-Perrier will be exhibiting at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in collaboration with Chatsworth

READER OFFER

Out of town guests can take advantage of the fabulous 'RHS Chelsea Flower Show at The Dorchester' offer on Wednesday, May 20 or Thursday, May 21, which includes:

- Luxury Suite accommodation for two
- English breakfast for two
- Two tickets to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show on Thursday, May 21
- A bottle of Champagne Laurent-Perrier Cuvée Rosé in Suite on arrival
- \blacksquare Suites from £945 per room per night, based on two adults sharing (VAT and service included).

For further information about the Chelsea Flower Show at The Dorchester, or to make a reservation, please contact The Dorchester on +44 20 7317 6530 or email reservations.TDL@dorchestercollection.com. Early reservations are strongly encouraged due to limited availability. Terms and conditions apply.



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USA MUSTANG MONUMENT, NEVADA

The crazy-beautiful brainchild of glamorous philanthropist Madeleine Pickens, Mustang Monument is every horse-lover or wannabe cowboy's idea of heaven. Originally dreamt up as a sanctuary for 650 wild horses destined for slaughter, it's now an ultra-smart working ranch. Under Pickens's watchful eye Mustang is brought to life by a team of highly charismatic men and women, and during its short opening season of June to September, it's likely she will host guests herself. A good two-and-a-half hour drive from Salt Lake City, it's in the real Wild West, and comes with its own 'Number 1 Cowboy', Clay Nannini (he even went to cowboy school). For all things equine, Clay will be your guide: ride to the top of the surrounding mountain ranges, or attempt to tail the wild herd at full pelt, your steed whinnying for its wild buddies. Or join Monty Heath, the former Navy Seal, for a dirt-buggy adventure out in the desert, where you can try your hand on his live-ammo range or go rock climbing. Back at the ranch, expect nothing less than absolute comfort, whether you choose a cottage or a luxury tepee (both with modern bathrooms). FLASH POINT Prepare to be wowed by the kind of service that can be delivered even in the middle of nowhere when someone talented puts their heart and soul into it. +1 888 979 1422; www.mustangmonument.com. Doubles from about £845

FRANCE

LA RESERVE HOTEL, PARIS

Don't hate La Réserve because she's beautiful. Actually, go ahead and try to hate her as much as you want. Futile! She'll charm the pantalons off you in a heartbeat. This latest addition to the La Réserve portfolio is a celebration of colour, texture and the Paris of Napoleon III and the belle epoque. It's impeccably done - just 14 rooms and 26 suites arranged around a central courtyard. The larger suites, facing the Eiffel Tower, are magnificent. Even the smallest rooms are sweetly sumptuous, swathed in silks and velvets. The keynote is a no-tassels-barred opulence, heavy on classical motifs, overgrown with floral flourishes. The exception is the pared-down spa - a La Réserve speciality. All in all, it's a pageant of flair and wit, courtesy of interiors superhero Jacques Garcia, who also did the quirky La Réserve flagship in Geneva. He has imbued the Paris hotel with a pleasing combination of grandeur, cosiness and respect for the past. He has also given this haughty Parisian beauty a sense of humour and a heart. FLASH POINT Garcia took inspiration from the paintings of James Tissot – in particular from one entitled Le Cercle de la Rue Royale. What's wrong with this picture? Nothing. But it's not nearly as nice as the hotel. +33 1 58 36 60 60; www.lareserve-paris.com. Doubles from about £560





UNDER £150

PORTUGAL HOTEL VALVERDE, LISBON

Right on Avenida da Liberdade, Lisbon's grandest boulevard, the Valverde rises up six floors behind its handsomely preserved, narrow façade. From the sumptuous, top-floor Valverde Suite to the cosy, classic bedrooms beneath, all 25 rooms bear the signature charm of interior designers Bastir (of the acclaimed Bairro Alto Hotel in Lisbon). Here, 1950s furniture has been mixed in with antique prints and abstract art from luminaries such as Vieira da Silva. Fabrics are heavy, often with brocade piping, and rugs tend to the geometric. Bathrooms favour black and white, from the honeycomb floor tiles to the standalone, cast-iron tubs and black-marble basin surrounds. Many trimmings and trappings draw on local talent, such as the Lacoste uniforms, a nod to the brand's Portuguese creative director, Felipe Oliveira Baptista. There's a pretty, flower-filled sitting room and, one floor down, a movie room and a large, leafy courtyard with a heated swimming pool - a rarity in the city centre. In the Sîtio Restaurant dishes are down-home rather than haute, and include much-loved codfish pasties and a good range of Portuguese wines. FLASH POINT For a real sense of place and unbeatable location, this one's got everything you need. +351 210 940 300; www.valverdehotel.com. Doubles from about £120



THE HOT LIST 2015



IRELAND THE DEAN, DUBLIN

Dublin has been crying out for The Dean. Over the past few years, from Brooklyn, Shoreditch and Portland have come the bare-brick burger joints (Bunsen, Jo'burger) and craft coffee shops (Kaph, Clement & Pekoe). But the hotel scene had yet to catch up with the Ace and its ilk. This is Dublin's answer. The lobby vibe is bang-on: at one end a bar serves flat whites and cocktails; at the other, iMacs glow at reception beneath a Tracy Emin neon sign reading 'I Fell in Love Here'. Bikes lean against the stairs, and maps are dished out marked with drinking dens and cutting-edge design stores. Rooms are no less Instagram-able, with turntables and stacks of vinyl, mini orange Smeg fridges, wooden 'munchies' trays (everything from O'Donnells crisps to Berocca) and works from up-and-coming Irish artists. But the mood isn't hipper-than-thou, but matey - up for the craic. 'Grab a plate and load it up', it says at the salad bar. 'Feck off and don't disturb', proclaim the bedroom-door notices. And at the weekend The Dean is certainly up for a party. Harcourt Street, on which it sits, is club central, and the hotel's glassenclosed rooftop bar-restaurant, Sophie's - views stretch to the Wicklow Mountains - is no less jumping. The 6.30 Wake-Up Call cocktail (minty, limey gin, Bénédictine, cherry Heering and egg-white) works perfectly at the appointed hour - morning or evening. FLASH POINT Dublin gets its coolest new hangout and hotel in one. +353 1 607 8110; www.thedean.ie. Doubles from about £75





UNDER £150

AUSTRALIA PUMPHOUSE POINT, TASMANIA

Conversions are old hat - barn, loft and the rest - but transforming a 1940s hydroelectric pumphouse and substation into a wilderness retreat is out of the ordinary by anyone's standards. The buildings on Lake St Clair have been adapted into two distinct spaces. One of them is 250 metres out over the lake, with 12 suites on three floors, a library and mid-century-furnished sitting rooms, with views across the lake to Cradle Mountain through seven-metre-high windows. The Shorehouse is home to another six suites. Sleeping at the pumphouse means you have to walk, cycle or take a golf buggy along the pier to the substation for a meal at the shared-table dining room. Log fires, pure-wool throws and tablets for ordering slabs of smoked salmon for the in-suite larders tell of a developer, Simon Currant, at the top of his game. You can walk off breakfast by mountain-biking through eucalyptus forests or going for a row across Australia's deepest (200 metres) lake. FLASH POINT This is all about old days and new ways. It took 18 years to bring this development to fruition, and it's a marvel. +61 7 4940 1838; www.pumphousepoint.com.au. Doubles from about £120





ITALY G-ROUGH, ROME

Rome's first true hipster-luxe hotel, G-Rough parlays 10 spacious rooms out of a compact 16th-century townhouse near Piazza Navona. The creation of the late Emanuele Garosci of PalazzinaG in Venice, together with Roman entrepreneur and 20th-century-design collector Gabriele Salini, G-Rough takes its 'G' from that Starck-designed Venetian sister hotel and its 'Rough' from the decision to strip back the walls and leave them that way - revealing a palimpsest of colour layers, fragments of decoration and even a few pencil sketches of uncertain date. Contemporary artist friends of the Salini family were invited to leave other traces - on stairwells, ceiling beams and elsewhere - and interiors were completed with a selection of original design classics from the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s by masters such as Ico Parisi and Giò Ponti, plus a few stylish upcycled pieces by Sicilian design firm Leftover. The result is a joy, a cool design den which at the same time feels like home - especially if you take the two rooms on any of the five floors and combine them into a single, four-berth apartment. Downstairs, the speakeasy-like entrance bar serves a better class of wine and spirit, while the 'exclusive Roman experiences' promised by so many of the capital's bespoke boutique hotels have more substance than most here, thanks to the consultation of art historian and opener-of-closed-doors Filippo Cosmelli. FLASH POINT In such an ornately baroque city, G-rough's stripped-back boho look is decidedly refreshing. +39 041 528 4644; www.g-rough.com. Doubles from about £300

UNDER £150

CANADA

THE DRAKE DEVONSHIRE, LAKE ONTARIO

This sister property to funky Drake Toronto is set on the shores of Lake Ontario amid the rolling hills of Prince Edward County. Owner Jeff Stober restored a crumbling, 19th-century iron foundry, surrounded by maple trees and a meandering stream, and then enhanced it with innovative additions, including a Philip Johnson-inspired glass box for meetings (and ping pong) and a barn-inspired pavilion for live music. Inside, the interior-design firm +Tongtong has used contrasting floor tiles to create a similar mismatched sensibility, and the 11 bedrooms and two suites have a mix of textures and colours, vintage and modern furniture. In-house art consultant Mia Nielsen, who has an eye for both gallery-quality paintings and up-and-coming Brooklyn muralists, has included works by Toronto collective Team Macho, who add weird pop-cultural references to junkyard paintings. Still, there are plenty more conventional features to balance the cool-kid mischievousness (such as a wonderful old wooden staircase) and the overriding vibe is relaxed and respectful of its superb surroundings. Chef Matt DeMille does a great job in the kitchen and, while the menu changes often, the fresh-caught pickerel fish is a sure-fire sensation. FLASH POINT Among the many excellent vineyards to visit in Prince Edward County, Norman Hardie Winery and Vineyard is a standout. +1 613 399 3338; www.drakedevonshire.ca. Doubles from about £120



PHOTOGRAPH: SIVAN ASKAYC





USA \$150 SHORELINE HOTEL WAIKIKI, HAWAII

These days the two-mile stretch of white-sand waterfront that is Waikiki Beach is dotted with as many hotel towers as palm trees. With the Diamond Head volcano as backdrop, the cerulean waters are as popular as ever with surfers, canoe paddlers and sea turtles. The new Shoreline Hotel Waikiki is a welcome waft of fresh air in an already crowded field; it's the second property in Hawaii from Joie de Vivre Hotels, which has made a name for itself among style- and price-conscious travellers for offering the holy trinity of quirky modern design, top-notch service and thoughtful, pareddown comfort, all in a peachy locality. You won't find mind-boggling oceanfront views or a huge pool here, but you will be a stone's throw from the designer-boutique runway that is Kalakaua Avenue, and barely two blocks from the beach. The 135 surfer-chic rooms have private verandahs, and there is an endless supply of coffee, pineapple iced tea and cucumbermint water down in the lobby. An in-house organic café offers fresh green juices and healthy takes on classics such as loco moco. Ask for a room on a high floor to avoid street and restaurant noise. FLASH POINT There is no better-situated and affordable hip hotel in the heart of Waikiki. +1 808 931 2444; www.shorelinehotelwaikiki.com. Doubles from about £140

CHINA

THE POTTINGER, HONG KONG

Here's a cheery celebration of Hong Kong's continuing fetish for converting office blocks into hotels. As such, it's a supremely successful transformation, both for the refined interiors and drone's-eye views of downtown Hong Kong. This is one of the oldest parts of the city, and the hotel - named after the first British governor and festooned with sepia photographs - pounds the heritage drum with gusto. There's no forecourt: double glass-fronted doors flanked by carriage lamps are all that separate the busy pavement from the hushed, mansion-like lobby. Inevitably in this city, neither the 61 regular rooms nor the seven suites are wildly spacious, but the Chinese-accented decor with pretty flower-and-bird motif is refreshing and the floor-to-ceiling windows allow plenty of light. Staff in crisp white jackets glide like mannequins around the Italian restaurant Gradini (the linguine in sea-urchin sauce is splendid). And for a glimpse of the non-stop reality TV show that is metropolitan Hong Kong, hop up to The Envoy bar's outdoor terrace. FLASH POINT Few hotels in the city can match The Pottinger for immediacy, excitement and a sense of history. +852 2308 3188; www.thepottinger.com. Doubles from about £200



SRI LANKA CAPE WELIGAMA

This hotel, which opened its designer doors on Sri Lanka's south coast last autumn, is the talk of the island, and deservedly so. They seem to have got everything right here. The 'no bills to sign' approach to hospitality - and that includes all drinks and even laundry - creates a refreshingly relaxed mood. Thai architect Lek Bunnag has designed a stunning crescent-moon-shaped infinity pool arching around the edge of a cliff above the Indian Ocean. The 40 contemporary-meets-colonial villas, all with either private or shared pools, have oodles of indoor/outdoor living space, ocean views and bathrooms with steam showers and spa beds for in-room treatments. Since Cape Weligama is the latest property from the family behind Ceylon Tea Trails, afternoon cream teas are a serious business here. The food is wonderful too. There are three restaurants serving up treats such as Sri Lankan egg-hopper breakfasts (highly recommended), coconut-crab curries, seafood salads and super-fresh sushi (and all can be taken at your villa). The beaches on either side of Weligama are wild rather than manicured, and fishermen balanced on stilts in the crashing waves make an irresistible photo op. FLASH POINT This is a terrific base for offshore blue-whale-watching and visiting cinnamon plantations or Galle Fort. +94 11 774 5700; www.capeweligama.com. Doubles from about £460

MALDIVES AMILLA FUSHI, BAA ATOLL

Huzzah! Here comes the latest hotshot on UNESCO-protected Baa Atoll.





NETHERLANDS

WALDORF ASTORIA AMSTERDAM

Tailor-fitted into six of Amsterdam's grandest Golden Age canal houses, this hotel vaunts a dazzling set of inherited jewels: here a 17th-century painted ceiling, there a wall panelled with dreamy landscapes. The reception desk is in a delicate rococo salon, beyond that rises a Louis XIV-style staircase. In between (in parts gutted through 1960s modernising zeal) comes space, light, and muted blues, cream and grey. In the Peacock Alley lobby-lounge, light gleams off white marble, tinkles off chandeliers, and flows in through tall windows from a large courtyard garden (planted with thousands of tulips in the spring). Rooms are reassuringly contemporary (as is the sleek Guerlain spa), though some of the smarter suites still have period touches. General manager Roberto Payer brings a healthy dollop of old-school charm, and his talents have rubbed off on the staff, who are unfailingly attentive while pleasingly devoid of have-a-nice-day gloss. Chef Sidney Schutte is rocketing the Librije's Zusje restaurant into the firmament of Amsterdam's best - it has already been awarded two Michelin stars. FLASH POINT The Waldorf combines unique Amsterdam period treasures with contemporary style and comfort. +31 20 718 4600; www.waldorfastoria3.hilton.com. Doubles from £395

THE HOT LIST 2015

THE HOT LIST 2015

TANZANIA

NAMIRI PLAINS, SERENGETI

A successful safari is going to get you close to animals but it's also going to give you a sense of being remote, of a unique adventure. This is difficult if camps are close together, and you find yourself in a queue of cars circling a big cat. There is little chance of that at Asilia's newest outpost because it sits alone in a zone of the Serengeti that has been closed for research for some 20 years. During that time, big cats made the most of the lack of humans and a home pride of lion linger around the water hole just below camp and show no sign of leaving. There is equally little chance of finding a crowd in camp as

there are only six well-spaced tents, with large beds, a larger bathroom area, and a seating area with wide savannah views. The mess tent has equally big vistas although some of the most memorable meals are out on the trail – egg-and-bacon breakfast butties while kicking over the remains of a leopard's kill. **FLASH POINT** The migration passes the plains towards the end of the year and the resident big cats see plenty of action. Journeys by Design (www.journeysbydesign.com) offers four nights in Namiri and three nights with mobile camp Olakira from £4,500 per person full board, including internal flights and park fees





SPAIN

THE SERRAS HOTEL, BARCELONA

Designer Eva Martínez went all out for New York loftstyle appeal here, with soaring ceilings, huge plate-glass windows and solid wood floors, while also working with traditional elements of Catalan design such as a monochromatic riff on the Modernisme hydraulic tiles that line so many Barcelona apartments. Wedged between the narrow lanes of the Barri Gótic and the glitzy, newly revived Port Vell, the building itself was conceived by 19th-century architect Francesc Daniel Molina (he also created the city's Plaça Reial) and Picasso is thought to have had his first studio here. The hotel is seriously comfortable with plenty of unexpected treats, including Le 9, a classy little nook tucked into a mezzanine floor above the lobby where Ruben Ubric mixes killer classic Martinis and Ibiza DJs gently jazz up the tunes. The bedrooms all have gorgeous Art Deco-inspired marble bathrooms with toplit rain showers that fool you into thinking you're bathing in sunlight. Star chef Marc Gascons heads Informal, a lively restaurant showcasing updated Catalan classics such as artichokes with truffles and boat-fresh fish cooked over coconut coals, as well as a mean tortilla at breakfast. Up on the roof terrace there's an outdoor fire for the cooler months and a pool with views for a summer splash. FLASH POINT For somewhere relaxed, sexy and stylish without being self-consciously cool, this place is spot-on. +34 93 169 1868; www.hoteltheserrasbarcelona.com. Doubles from about £160

CARIBBEAN

CHEVAL BLANC ST-BARTH ISLE DE FRANCE

There are no Barbados Versailles-like follies or Mustique Taj Mahals on St Barth's. The beaches, where everyone is topless or nude, are perfection. Even Diane von Furstenberg and Stephanie Seymour lie on towels on the sand, their drinks in plastic coolers. And, like all the best places, there is a grand old lady who has the social scene clutched to her bosom. The Cote d'Azur has the Hôtel du Cap, here it's the Cheval Blanc St-Barth Isle de France on Flamands Beach. Until last year she was just called Isle de France, but she recently married into the LVMH family, which owns the Cheval Blanc hotel trio (Maldives and Courchevel are the other two), a union that made many old-timers nervous. At first sight, nothing has changed, particularly its heart and soul: the staff were always young, charming and unimpeachably professional, only now they are dressed in cute seersucker uniforms. The decor (white-washed French country furniture and pretty fabrics) has been upgraded with touches of the palest salmon-pink on everything from glasses to beach towels. The food in the two restaurants (the Case de l'Isle by the pool and the Cabane de l'Isle on the beach) had always been excellent, and the perfect balance hasn't been affected; it's still the same mix of gazpacho, salmon tartare, the best frites in the world (no exaggeration) and sole meunière. It's a feat of restraint on LVMH's part to have understood how good the beauty they inherited already was. FLASH POINT The old lady of St Barth's has had a little work done but still reigns supreme. Carrier (+44 161 492 1354; www.carrier.co.uk) offers seven nights from £2,355 per person, including flights and transfers





USA ACE HOTEL DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

Impish humour twinkles from every corner of this Jazz Age beauty, from the white frontage billboard shouting HELLO LA to its rear windows throbbing under seven-foot red neon letters that proclaim JESUS SAVES. Although the bedrooms' chromophobic design lacks warmth and a touch of luxe, they all come with a turntable and vinyl selection; the pricier ones have claw-foot baths and Martin acoustic guitars. For non-guests, weekend access to the exhilarating Upstairs bar is screened by the magnificently bearded David Schrock (pass muster faster by quoting him a poem, as he pens verse in his downtime). Echoing the tattoos of the artfully scruffy floor staff, the walls of LA Chapter restaurant are adorned with pencilled graffito portraits (including late Ace honcho Alex Calderwood) by local artists the Haas brothers. Yet the food is anything but sketchy: a southern-California menu turns on seasonal-organic staples - sea bass with purple yams, tiger's milk and palm hearts, for example - teamed with modern wines, artisanal cocktails and the inevitable range of crafty, creamy, fruity ales. The Theater, built in 1927 to screen movies by maverick studio United Artists, has been restored, and now hosts select shows and concerts, including Benjamin Millepied's LA Dance Project (with missus Natalie Portman in attendance) and punk diva Patti Smith. Amid its lavish Spanish-Gothic interior a fake-medieval mural depicts Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and DW Griffith as chivalric nobles; on the opposite wall, old-school studio moguls are portrayed as dragons. Sly wit, it seems, is part of the Ace's DNA. FLASH POINT This place has electrified lower Broadway, which now pulses with hipstermatic archness. +1 213 623 3233; www.acehotel.com/losangeles. Doubles from about £160



INDIA

JAMTARA WILDERNESS CAMP, PENCH NATIONAL PARK

Avijit Dutta, the resident naturalist here, has an infectious enthusiasm for every detail of the park's fauna and flora. The big draw is the chance of a tiger or leopard sighting. But while these are by definition random, staying at Jamtara does guarantee a top-drawer Indian safari experience between game drives. Join Dutta on a walking safari through the forests of broadleaf teak, flame of the forest and ghostly, bone-white kulu trees in the park's buffer zone or experience village life as the personal guest of one of the staff. Back at Jamtara there is a pool to laze around, or cookery lessons around a campfire under a massive 200-year-old banyan tree. Learn how to make dishes such as baingan bharta, a spicy smoked-aubergine and roast-garlic version of baba ghanoush. Meals are served in an open-sided dining room on wonderfully irregular giant mango-wood tables made from a tree felled to build a nearby road. The polished wood floors and antique furniture in the camp's 12 stylish tents are sourced from reclamation yards all over India. FLASH POINT For a night you will never forget, sleep in one of Jamtara's Star Beds on an outdoor platform under a canopy of shooting stars with a soundtrack of jungle sounds. www.jamtarawilderness.com. Doubles from £185 full board





AUSTRALIA

ONE&ONLY HAYMAN ISLAND, GREAT BARRIER REEF

This 1950s hotel has long been considered by Australians as the most glamorous along the Barrier Reef. Since it reopened last year after a £40 million refurbishment, it's certainly become a lot more polished. Although the architecture is still very Dr No (a long, white, three-storey brutalist building set off against a tropical-island fantasy), its rooms are softly sexy, with muslin-draped beds, egg baths for two and fragrant Malin + Goetz body products. Not that you're inside much, given the number of outdoor distractions, from dinghies and jet-skis to lake-sized pools (one for adults, the other for families), tennis and squash courts, and a spa with a Bastien Gonzalez pedicure room and a James Duigan-staffed gym. Being the northernmost Whitsunday island, it's close to the reef and the bright sand of Whitehaven Beach. If you're more sloth than squirrel, this is a place to lie supine for days, sipping fresh Piña Coladas under palm trees and rolling between sensational breakfast buffets (13 different breads are made daily) and moonlit dinners of lobster curry. FLASH POINT It's extravagant, but a helicopter ride over the reef to Whitehaven is worth every penny. +61 749 401 234; hayman.oneandonlyresorts.com. Doubles from about £395

CHILE VINA VIK, MILLAHUE

Alex and Carrie Vik already have three wildly innovative hotels, but this is their most audacious yet. It all started a decade ago when they set about producing Latin America's finest red wine from their 4,450-hectare estate in Millahue. The grapes are grown holistically and processed in a radical, low-slung winery designed by Chilean architect Smiljan Radic, finished last summer. Then, in the autumn, this superb 22-suite hotel opened on the crest of a hill with vineyard views in all directions. It has an undulating roof in bronzed titanium and walls of glass that render it almost translucent. Each of the suites is an inimitable creation. Gabler's Grisalla, for example, was hand-painted over six months by the Chilean Realist Alvaro Gabler; Azulejo is lined with blue Portuguese tiles decorated by ceramicist Pablo Montealegre. Chef Rodrigo Bravo produces farm-to-table fare (meats cured in the kitchen; wild boar from the hills; rockfish from a surfer dude on the coast) served family-style in the minimalist dining room. There are mountain-bike trails above the vines, paddocks stocked with horses and vinotherapy treatments in the spa. FLASH POINT This one-off property is challenging the boundaries of hotel design from an unlikely base in rural Chile. Explorations Company (www.explorationscompany.com) offers three nights from £4,185 per person full board, including tours, Iberia flights and transfers





TANZANIA

MWIBA LODGE, SERENGETI

Until very recently, this place, set in 2.5 million hectares in the southern Serengeti leased by Texas-based billionaire Dan Friedkin, was enjoyed solely by his family and a tight circle of celebrity friends (George Clooney brought Amal Alamuddin here for a pre-wedding safari). Now, anyone with deep enough pockets can check in. The eight beautiful glass-and-canvas suites, balanced between candelabra and fever trees above a rocky gorge, were designed by Lisa Rorich, the South African architect behind Singita Grumeti's sexy Faru Faru Lodge. Here, it's all about the intimacy of camping with every conceivable indulgence attached, from eco-friendly, air-cooled four-posters to deep bathtubs with mesmerising views. The well-stocked library and exceptional wine cellar are to be expected, but the huge infinity pool, on its own deck overlooking the endless plains dotted with wildlife, is a surprising treat. There are giant beanbags for sinking into and a rustic-chic gazebo where seafood and salad platters are served at lunch. The land is protected by a conservation fund set up by Friedkin, and as such is helping to secure a vital wildlife migration corridor between the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and the Serengeti National Park. As the land is private, guided walks, cocktails at dusk on the edge of the escarpment, night drives and helicopter flips are the norm. FLASH POINT Mwiba's elevated location provides a bird's-eye view of the annual wildebeest migration from December to March. Scott Dunn (+44 20 8682 5070; www.scottdunn.com) offers an 11-night trip, with four nights at Mwiba Lodge and seven nights at Fundu Lagoon from £5,165 per person, including flights and transfers

JAPAN

AMAN TOKYO

In Japan's crowded capital, space is the biggest luxury. And that makes Aman Tokyo its most decadent hotel. The brand's first inner-city property occupies the top six floors of a skyscraper east of the Imperial Palace. Most Amans exist to eliminate – temporarily – the modern world. This one embraces it. The metropolis is a constant presence, visible at every turn sprawling towards the horizon through floor-to-ceiling windows. The heart of the hotel is a cavernous lobby beneath a giant lantern-style ceiling. Like silence in a tea ceremony, it's a potent void that radiates calm. Rituals borrowed from traditional ryokan inns create symbolic breaks with the world outside: guests are encouraged to remove their shoes when entering their rooms and have the option to bathe in the Japanese fashion (shower first, bath second). Local ingredients inform an East-West menu at the restaurant. The Japanese breakfast is good, the Western breakfast with eggs Benedict is better. No surprise that the Aman Spa instantly becomes Tokyo's best, thanks to its knowledgeable therapists and their confident hands. The 84 guest rooms are understated by design and cleverly arranged, with sliding screens to maximise the sense of space. At 71 square metres, even the entry-level rooms are generous. Corner suites feel like glass cubes suspended from the sky. Ask for one facing west towards the sunset - on clear nights you can see Mount Fuji glowing in the distance. FLASH POINT Tokyo Station, terminus of the Bullet Train, is within walking distance - convenient for trips to Kyoto. +81 352 243 345; www.amanresorts.com. Doubles from about £500



PHOTOGRAPHS: KEN KOCHEY; ANNIE SCHLECHTER



USA THE LUDLOW, NEW YORK

Right in the middle of the gritty Lower East Side, a couple of blocks down from Katz's deli where crowds queue for piled-high pastrami sandwiches, is this latest hotel from Sean MacPherson, the man-about-town behind The Bowery, The Jane and The Marlton. It's already a hot destination, a thrumming spot to see and be seen in. There's the laid-back clubby lounge with vintage shearling sofas, artwork propped up on the mantelpiece and a zinc-topped bar in the corner where everyone hangs out during the day. And, in the summer, a courtyard garden where Planters' Punch and whisky cocktails are served. All rooms have the same smart, simple design: Portuguese-style, dark-wood beds, sheepskin throws on velvet chairs and white-tile and marble bathrooms with groovy brass fittings. But the real ace is Dirty French, the brasserie-style restaurant (from Major Food Group, which also owns Carbone and ZZ's Clam Bar in Greenwich Village), where young fashionable things gather for French food with a twist - scallops and artichoke or duck à l'orange with ras el hanout - on a Friday night. Brick walls and classic bistro tables are pepped up with curving banquette leather seats, a huge theatre-dressing-room mirror on one wall and clusters of hand-painted hot-pink porcelain chickens roosting on ledges above the doors. FLASH POINT The Lower East Side is a happening place to be (an outpost of Soho House is opening on the same street) so this is a clever move from MacPherson, who is always ahead of the game. +1 212 432 1818; www.ludlowhotel.com. Doubles from about £170

BOTSWANA

&BEYOND SANDIBE OKAVANGO SAFARI LODGE

Recently reopened after a massive redesign by Fox Browne Creative, this gorgeous lodge is in a prime location on the southern edge of Chief's Island in the 22,500-hectare Chitabe Concession. Everything has been boldly reinvented and fine-tuned for a new generation of safari-goers desperate for a clearer connection with their surroundings. Open-sided and cathedral-like, the main lodge has a buzzy mezzaninelevel bar sculpted from layers of raw timber. Here, fuelled by ginger-infused cocktails, guests share excited tales of close encounters with lion, leopard, cheetah, wild dog and elephant on their twice-daily game drives. Meals are served in surprising locations - always with a view - so a lunch of chilled soup, spicy chicken skewers and fresh-fruit sorbet could be taken on a raised deck stretching out into the marshlands; supper might be a lantern-lit barbecue in the middle of nowhere. And anything can be delivered to your solarpowered suite. The 12 hideaways, set beneath jackalberry and sausage trees, are inspired by weavers' nests and clad in timber scales like a pangolin, a peculiar and elusive nocturnal creature. The streamlined interiors open onto big, splitlevel decks, each with a deep plunge pool. After dark, fireflies dance to the soundtrack of painted reed frogs and hippo. FLASH POINT Mould-breaking design in a traditional market: this is what going on safari should look and feel like right now. +27 11 809 4300; www.andbeyond.com. From £543 per person per night full board, including safari activities, transfers and park fees





FRENCH POLYNESIA

THE BRANDO, TETIAROA

Some 50km from Tahiti there's a head-lollingly exquisite private atoll called Tetiaroa, bought by Marlon Brando when scouting for locations for *Mutiny on the Bounty* in 1960 and still owned by his family. After six years of difficult but ingenious construction, The Brando opened quietly last year as a tiny and supremely polished all-inclusive hideaway on one of the atoll's larger islets. Here you will find: a short airstrip for the hotel's eight-seater plane (guests are transferred from Tahiti); two quiet restaurants; a spa set over an orchid-thick lily pond; gardens of fruit and vegetables; hives of bees producing

amber-pale honey; and 35 very private glass and iron-wood villas (each with plunge pool) set back from a blindingly white beach. Ah, this location! Contained inside a living coral reef, the atoll's dozen islets surround a five-mile lagoon so shallow its blue can be seen from space; orbiting astronauts have slapped their foreheads in wonder at such a weirdly lucent presence. FLASH POINT Nothing here seems real: the sound of the Pacific bashing the distant reef thickens the nights and is as lulling as the gorgeous dawns. www.thebrando.com. Villas from about £2,730 per night full board





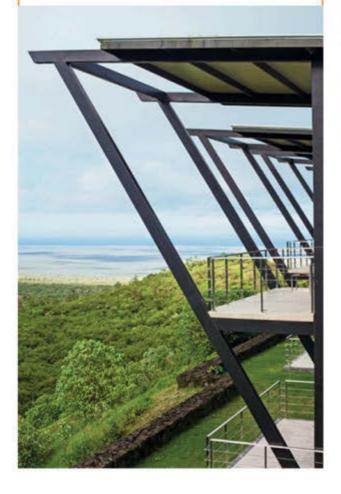
CARIBBEAN EL BLOK, PUERTO RICO

This incongruously brutalist property is in the ramshackle fishing village of Esperanza on Viegues, the low-key island off Puerto Rico where wild horses run free on sugar-sand beaches. The design, by local firm Fuster + Architects, plays a big part in the hotel's proclaimed eco-sensibility. The façade of curved, perforated concrete panels, for example, references slabs of porous coral; the cut-outs trap cool trade winds, circulating air and providing a constant breeze. Most of the furniture was made on the island using recycled hardwoods, and installations in coconut fibre by San Juan artists Jamie and Javier Suarez add to the Puerto Rican esprit. The 21 rooms are big, if sparsely furnished, with a few colourful touches in butterfly-wing chairs or throws on an otherwise white bed. But then in Puerto Rico life is lived outside, and on warm evenings you'll find New York power players gathered on the roof terrace sipping hand-crafted guanabana-slush cocktails before sitting down for a late supper at the open-air restaurant. Co-owner Simon Baeyertz, a former music-industry executive, has partnered with the island's star chef José Enrique and his restaurant shares equal billing with the hotel. It's across the street from the beach so grills are the order of the day and Enrique's Caribbean charcuterie board with snapper, lobster sausage and smoked-prawn salad is an absolute must. FLASH POINT Staff can set you up on horse-riding expeditions along some of the Caribbean's most beautiful secret beaches. +1 787 741 6020; www.elblok.com. Doubles from about £120

ECUADOR

PIKAIA LODGE, GALAPAGOS

Between the cloud forest and the sea, swirled in mist or resplendent in bright Pacific light, the hotel world's latest evolution on the Galápagos is this astonishingly smart spot balanced on the rim of an extinct volcano. The design is startling: wood, glass and steel beams make the structure resemble a coastguard look-out. The views of the shore and the sea are peerlesss. The land was previously a cattle ranch, one of many on Santa Cruz island, where most of the population lives (its little capital, Puerto Ayora, is the jumping-off point for cruises around the archipelago). The lodge's Ecuadorian owners have cleared the land and undertaken a restoration of endemic species. Darwin's finches hop about on the paths; giant tortoises forage where they please. Staying here is a beguiling and atmospheric experience. Directed drafts remove the need for air-conditioning or powered ventilation; you feel very close to the weather and moods of this astonishing world, which can be eerie one moment and heavenly the next. The restaurant (supreme fish dishes) and spa (one of the best massages around) and a copy of On the Origin of Species in every room make Pikaia a sublime place to reflect on your snorkelling discoveries and blue-footed booby encounters. FLASH POINT The lodge has its own boat for exploring nearby islands: the full miracle of the Galápagos is guaranteed by profusions of birds, sea life and iguanas only a short cruise away. Miraviva (+44 20 7186 1111; www.miravivatravel.com) offers a 10-day Ecuador trip from £5,950 per person, including seven nights at Pikaia Lodge full board, excursions, flight and transfers





USAPARK HYATT NEW YORK

A lot of hotels brag about their art collections, but the 350 museum-quality works on the walls of Park Hyatt's new New York flagship are the real deal. There in the entrance lobby hangs a Sigmar Polke. Opposite stands Daniel Libeskind's polished stainless-steel Spirit House Chair. Ascend to the second-floor reception to find two works apiece by Richard Serra and Ellsworth Kelly, and a Christian Marclay in the Living Room, as they call the bar (very much the place for a Pisco Sour come cocktail hour). Elsewhere there are diptychs by Rob Fischer and Robert Longo, a Darren Almond beside the third-floor lift and a Sol LeWitt on the corridor that runs between the two presidential suites. But then this is a hotel where everything has been thought through, from the Narcisco Rodriguez frocks worn by female staff (so dress up!) and the bespoke Essie nail colours in the spa to the fact they supply paper cups as well as porcelain beside the in-room coffee-makers lest you want it to go. Top marks, too, for the bathroom products from Nolita perfumerie Le Labo; for the limo service that will take you anywhere within 10 blocks for free; even for the far-from-obvious classical tracks that play in the public areas and underwater in the 25th-floor pool, a selection curated by staff at Carnegie Hall, which stands opposite the hotel's discreet West 57th Street marquee. FLASH POINT Insomniacs can request a sound machine from housekeeping to help them sleep. +1 646 774 1234; newyork.park.hyatt.com. Doubles from about £430



MONTENEGRO

REGENT HOTEL, PORTO MONTENEGRO

The new Regent hovers over the glittering marina, with its intricate choreography of yachts coming and going, like a latter-day Venetian palazzo. Designer Tino Zervudachi (who counts Mick Jagger and Marie-Chantal of Greece among his clients) has created nautically themed interiors: stripes dominate the dining room; bedrooms are highlighted in crisp blue-and-white, with teak panelling, rope detailing and just a hint of semaphore in the artworks. Only the library bar looks as though it might have been transplanted from Pall Mall, all clubby leather and antiquarian books, so you can broaden the mind while simultaneously numbing it with a choice of 25 Champagnes. The hotel is well placed for exploring the sprawling Bay of Kotor area with its medieval fortified towns and 16th-century Venetian architecture, island churches and mountain monasteries. Then come back and relax beneath an ancient olive tree in the sunken Italian garden; or dine on the terrace, where the seasonal menu might include wild turbot with saffron-infused almond mousseline and vanilla velouté, as well as a heavenly Valrhona Chocolate pudding. FLASH POINT Guests have access to the restaurants and 80-metre pool with views of the Adriatic at Porto Montenegro Lido Club. +382 32 660 660; www.regentportomontenegro.com. Doubles from £180





USA

METROPOLITAN BY COMO, MIAMI BEACH

With every venue in town trying to out-beautify the next, this is an exceptionally well run and quietly elegant escape, a big sigh of relief amid all the razzamatazz. A fashionable, grown-up crowd has made the Met home already, sipping rosemary-and-thyme-infused gin and tonics on the terrace. And beyond a hedge-lined walkway is the pool, with four-poster sun loungers and bar, a few steps away from the beach and ocean. A brilliant makeover by Italian designer Paola Navone has restored the Art Deco glamour of the original 1939 hotel. The bedrooms share a simple aesthetic with a pale pistachio and grey scheme; vintage-style furnishings are mixed up with Navone's own contemporary pieces for Gervasoni. In the restaurant, scalloped architectural details are scaled-down for the tableware, on which the fish-focused food is served (ask if they have any of the delicious, one-in-2,000 ivory salmon). An intimate urban spa and a rooftop hydrotherapy pool top off this capsule of serenity. FLASH POINT It's just a 100-minute flight from here to Parrot Cay by COMO in the Turks and Caicos. Now that's a dual-destination break to take on board. +1 305 695 3600; www.comohotels.com. Doubles from £205

CARIBBEAN

BELLE MONT FARM, ST KITTS & NEVIS

Smart-thinking hoteliers nabbed the best beaches in the Caribbean long ago (Sandy Lane, Cap Juluca, Little Dix Bay) so now all the exciting things happen in the hills. The 42-room Belle Mont Farm opened last December almost 1,000ft up the rain-forested flanks of northern St Kitts. Tremendous views to neighbouring St Eustatius are the first point of wow, closely followed by the refined one-bedroom guesthouses created by star designer Bill Bensley. Well versed in fashioning foliage-rich megahotels in Asia (Four Seasons Langkawi, Oberoi Mauritius), here he has added Caribbean keynotes such as woodshingle roofs and tropical paintings by artist Kate Spencer. Some may balk at the outdoor bathrooms, but there's no issue with the infinity plunge pools and whirr-down projection screens that replace the customary TVs. The let's-startafresh food is by Christophe Letard, whose New Caribbean menu includes cinnamon-braised goat and loin, and lemongrass-poached lobster with dasheen risotto. Isabelle Legeron oversees a cellar strong on natural wines. This hotel is the first to open on Kittitian Hill, where owner Val Kempadoo hopes to create a community that will raise the bar in the world of sustainable luxury. FLASH POINT Set on a 400-acre organic hillside farm, this is a blast of fresh air for the region. +1 869 465 7388; www.bellemontfarm.com. Doubles from £500





FRANCE

PENINSULA PARIS

So perky and well-cast are the uniformed bellhops, the tremendous scale of this restored Right Bank landmark doesn't feel too gobsmacking, even if guests are drip-fed dazzling luxury everywhere from the lobby, with its hand-blown Bohemian glass illumination, to LiLi, the Cantonese restaurant where an artwork resembling a ceiling-height Chinese-opera headdress glints with 30,000 crystal droplets. Adjoining the slightly masculine Deco bedrooms, with their neutral colour schemes and barely-there tech, are dressing rooms angled and panelled like first-class train compartments, and bathrooms so narcissistically mirrored you have to laugh. Elite suites have rooftop gardens with panoramic views over Paris, like beautiful serviced penthouses, whose inhabitants are unlikely to venture down to Bar Kléber for a nightcap. As you roam between the bars, the breakfast salon and the vast terrace overlooking Avenue Kléber, you'll see yards of gold leaf, marble, record-breaking silk tassels and ceiling paintings, all created by craftsmen usually found gilding national monuments such as Les Invalides, Palais Garnier or the Palace of Versailles. If this sounds remotely museum-like or stuffy, think again: the gourmet restaurant, L'Oiseau Blanc, has aviation-themed loos and the service is unforced and smiley. FLASH POINT It cost £600 million to do up, and it's a contender for the shiniest of the new five-stars, yet the Peninsula Paris still manages to be fun and intriguing. +33 1 58 12 28 88; paris. peninsula.com. Doubles from about £630



UK THE PIG NEAR BATH, SOMERSET

Between Bristol and Bath, the third and largest of the Pig group's litter is ideally placed for a weekend of West Country romping. The 29 rooms are in a goldenstone, Grade II-listed Georgian pile in 20 acres of grounds, which include a stroll-worthy walled kitchen garden and massage huts. The group's trademark rusticchic look (shades of taupe Farrow and Ball painted walls; mismatched furniture and rugs; papier-mâché stag heads and a heavy oak floor scavenged from railway carriages) works well with the Georgian bones and contributes to the unpretentious, relaxed, atmosphere. Bedrooms in the main house have views of the grounds and frolicking deer - the larger ones have four-posters and claw-foot baths; two-storey kitchen garden suites are more private. Still, you'll find yourself spending a disproportionate amount of time in the conservatory restaurant. Like the other Pigs, it sources 90 per cent of ingredients from within a 25-mile radius; many of the vegetables - broad beans, chard, five types of garlic - are homegrown. Inevitably, swine feature prominently (the hock Scotch eggs and pork-crackling batons are flawless) but the delicious 'Kentucky' fried rabbit is another highlight. Consistently warm, efficient service throughout tops off another spot-on piggy offering. FLASH POINT The group has served up another impeccable restaurant-led retreat - and, unlike at some hotels in these parts, you won't need to remortgage to stay the weekend. +44 1761 490490; www.thepighotel.com. Doubles from £139



HOTOGRAPHS: PHILIP LEE HARVEY; RAYMOND PATRICK

NAMIBIA

HOANIB SKELETON COAST CAMP

If you've been to so many African game lodges that you have had enough of that Hemingway-era aesthetic, then this new camp by Wilderness Safaris will be just the thing. Straddling the private Palmwag Concession and the lonely Skeleton Coast, it is accessible only by light aircraft. The camp consists of seven twin-bedded tents and one family unit. But the word 'tent' doesn't do them anything like justice. Canvas-covered wall partitions sit on polished concrete floors, along with a vast panel of sliding glass in front of the bed. A white-canvas roof swoops like a swan's wing overhead. The furniture is coolly understated, but provides enough comfort to sit for hours watching oryx stalk through the camp. At night, perhaps after a supper of tender kudu steak, guests head to a bonfire and sit with blankets over their knees to listen, entranced, to the barefoot, Crusoe-like figure of Flip Stander, who has spent most of his life tracking the Palmwag pride, one of the last groups of desert-adapted lions in the world. The truly fortunate will see some of these on a game drive, along with elephants cropping trees in the dried-out bed of the Hoanib River. FLASH POINT The privilege of being more or less alone in the desert, yet buffeted by the kind of comforts more readily associated with metropolitan hotels. www.wilderness-safaris.com. From £320 per person sharing per night



USASIXTY SOHO, NEW YORK

In its previous incarnation as 60 Thompson, this boutique hotel pioneer charmed the fashion and media crowd with its fantastic location in the less touristy edge of SoHo west of West Broadway. But at 14 years old, the 97-room property deserved a thorough refresh, particularly as it was readying for its debut as the flagship of Jason Pomeranc's newly minted SIXTY Hotel group. Pomeranc, a former partner in the Thompson brand, hired rocker-chic Brit designer Tara Bernerd to bring her modern take on informal luxury to the project (she collaborated with Pomeranc on London's Belgraves in 2012). The lobby and Gordon Bar have a combination of low-slung mid-century and contemporary furniture in cocooned seating areas, large-scale works by Harland Miller, table-top sculptural succulents, a living wall and tinted mirrored walls. In the bedrooms, dark-wood floors, bespoke petrol-blue cabinetry, tidy velvet seating and caramel leather headboards mix it up for an elegant European feel. The neighbourhood now has the sophisticated artists' hangout it's always needed. FLASH POINT The rooftop lounge is one of the most sought-after spots in SoHo for evening drinks. +1 877 431 0400; www.sixtyhotels.com. Doubles from £235

JAPAN THE RITZ-CARLTON KYOTO, JAPAN

Ostentatiousness is frowned upon in Japan's old capital, so Ritz-Carlton turned down the volume for its new 134-room hotel; and in doing so it has taken the brand in an exciting new direction. Blink and you'll miss the humble street entrance. Venture inside, however, and things get interesting. Discreet partitions in the lobby create intimacy without sacrificing scale. Works by 80 artists and artisans give a nod to Kyoto's culture of refinement. The rooms have everything you'd expect, but are also disciplined in wabisabi, the aesthetic of 'elegant simplicity', and each contains a bonsai tree. The best rooms face east towards the river and the rising sun. The Corner Suite, with tatami rooms and futon beds, is very special, creating the feel of a ryokan but with all the gubbins of a five-star hotel. The Japanese restaurant, Mizuki, is excellent. Most Kyoto restaurants specialise in one thing, but here there are choices, including tempura, sushi and teppanyaki. Foodies, though, should choose kaiseki, Kyoto's own elaborate cuisine. Instead of wine or sake, ask the sommelier to pair your meal with different teas, some of which he blends himself. FLASH POINT Early risers can join a bicycle tour along the riverbank to the Shimogamo shrine, one of the city's most fascinating Shinto sites. +81 75 746 5555; www.ritzcarlton.com. Doubles from about £290







OMAN

ALILA JABAL AKHDAR

You'll need a head for heights, but from the hotel's 10,000ft ridge-top eyrie there are heart-fluttering views of Oman's Western Hajar Mountains that make it all worthwhile. The landscape unfurls in earthy mineral hues such as the exposed ophiolite rock of the dramatic peaks, also used to construct the hotel. Each of the 84 rooms and two villas has spellbinding vistas: Ridge View Rooms overlook a plummeting gorge; from Mountain View rooms you can watch the sun casting its dusky shadow over the rockscape. The interiors are a nicely judged distillation of restrained Asian decor with local touches such as custom-made Omani furniture, the nose-tingling scent of frankincense on arrival in reception, the Juniper restaurant with its gargantuan, wizened-branch centrepiece and a dimly lit spa built to resemble a traditional Omani village. Guides will take you to the fragrant village of Al Ain, the centre of Oman's celebrated rosewater production, and hiking through valleys luxuriant with date palms and orchards of pomegranate, almond and apricot trees. But resist the temptation to do too much: the sense of tranquility here is positively meditative. FLASH POINT Alila has pioneered this part of the Al Hajar Mountains, but there are other hotels in the pipeline, so go before everyone else. +968 2534 4200; www.alilahotels.com. Doubles from £250

CHINA

ROSEWOOD BEIJING, CHINA

If expectations are heightened the minute you slip into the soft, caramelleather interior of the hotel's sleek car at Norman Foster's Beijing Airport, they will be exceeded on arrival. Monumental bronze Jiao Tu, sons of the dragon, stand guard in front of the Mongolian-bluestone exterior; step inside and all the different facets of Chinese culture are here, from the lobby's Shan Shui mountainscape to the cloisonné paintings symbolising yin and yang in the 283 elegantly homely rooms and suites. Australian-based BARstudio, acclaimed for its Park Hyatt Sydney design, has integrated a keen feeling of space, from the huge pool with its glinting mosaics to the buzzy Country Kitchen - one of six restaurants - where Peking ducks are roasted and dumplings (try the pot-sticker minced-pork ones) are kneaded and stretched, then served by waitresses in bespoke Caroline Deleens uniforms. Bespoke, too, are the scents in the marble bathrooms, from fragrance maestro Lorenzo Villoresi. FLASH POINT The artworks, both contemporary and ancient, reveal layers of Chinese history in an utterly unique way. +86 10 6597 8888; www.rosewoodhotels.com. Doubles from £240



98

ITALY PORTRAIT FIRENZE, FLORENCE

Brilliantly placed on the north bank of the Arno, near all the best museums and galleries and the shopping of Via Tornabuoni, this is the latest addition to the Ferragamo portfolio (and sister to Portrait Roma). Ferragamo golden boy Michele Bonan's immaculate interiors draw inspiration from the 1950s and 1960s when Florence was the haute-couture capital of Italy, as captured in the hotel's wonderful collection of monochrome prints of film stars, catwalk shows and fabulous frocks from that era. More than half of the 34 deeply comfortable dove-grey and white suites have floor-to-ceiling windows and that all-important Ponte Vecchio view, along with sleek Carrara-marble bathrooms, discreet technology and a dinky kitchenette hidden in a lacquered cabinet should you want a night in. If not, Caffé dell'Oro's all-day menu includes saffron-yellow risotto alla Milanese and tagliata of Chianina beef. Portrait Firenze radiates understated elegance and good taste, and this, along with the sort of service that can arrange a private dinner below the statue of David, is giving more traditional five-star hotels a sprint for their money. FLASH POINT The magnificent Penthouse Floor, with its showstopper of a terrace, must be a contender for the most exclusive bolthole in the city. +39 055 272 68000; www.portraitfirenze.com. Doubles from about £330





SOUTH AFRICA

FOUR SEASONS THE WESTCLIFF, JOHANNESBURG

The opening of South Africa's first Four Seasons, in a leafy, historic neighbourhood of Johannesburg, is timely. Jozi, as the city is known, is shrugging off its badpress reputation to emerge as a hip and cutting-edge city, and it has a vibrant creative scene spanning the worlds of fashion, art and food to prove it. When it was known simply as The Westcliff, this was a favourite with jetlagged travellers embarking on a safari. The hillside village-resort vibe and unexpectedly glorious views over the treetops remain unchanged, but months of rigorous renovation have given rise to elegant new interiors with local artisanal detailing, from beadwork to embroidery. The restaurant, View, has an impressive, local-produce-driven menu (red mullet in Bouillabaisse jus; miso-marinated wagyu ribeye), while all-day Flames specialises in typically South African barbecued steaks and Alsace-style pizzas from a wood-burning oven. Luscious puddings by former Mount Nelson pastry chef Vicky Gurovich are a highlight. The massive streetlevel spa, with its gym, lap pool, café and deli, ensure the hotel attracts a steady stream of well-heeled locals, cranking up the already clearly audible buzz about the city's most exciting hotel opening in years. FLASH POINT The bar in the rooftop après-spa garden is bound to be a year-round hot spot for after-work drinks. +27 11 4816000; www.fourseasons.com. Doubles from about £295



FRANCE C2 HOTEL, MARSEILLE

Le Corbusier chose gritty Marseille for his experimental Unité d'Habitation, and 60-odd years later France's second-largest metropolis has reclaimed its reputation for innovative architecture. The latest arrival is this intimate, 20-room hotel owned by architect couple Claire Fatosme and Christian Lefèvre, who took two years to convert a 19th-century mansion into a stylish urban retreat with steel, glass and vegetal-coloured walls. Close to the Vieux Port and surrounded by smart boutiques, the unassuming entrance leads to a secret courtyard garden furnished with bright Patricia Urquiola chairs. Then it's into the cathedral-like lobby - a soulful mix of oak parquet floors, ornate stucco mouldings, cherubic ceiling frescoes and handpicked contemporary designer furnishings - and bar (order a platter of Pata Negra tapas with your cocktails). Up the monumental marble and bronze staircase, the big bedrooms are a restful combination of grey and white, with exposed brick walls and thick carpets printed with an aerial map of Marseille. Best bets: the fourth-floor suites, 43 and 44, for the sunlit terraces and front-row view of Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde. Even off-season, you can boost your Mediterranean glow with a revitalising skin treatment at the underground Filorga spa, then relax in the heated indoor pool, carved into the rock. **FLASH POINT** Take the shuttle boat to the hotel's private island, lle Degaby, a slab of white granite where there's a mini-fort, sun beds and fantastic picnics waiting. +33 4 95 05 13 13; www.c2-hotel.com. Doubles from £140



HOTOGRAPHS: DAVID CROOKES; MING TANG-EVANS

TURKEY

MANDARIN ORIENTAL, BODRUM

The sizzle of cicadas, the chink of ice in a glass, speedboats streaking across the water, these are the only sounds to distract from the soporific haze of a day on the Bodrum peninsula, playground to Istanbul's affluent. And despite its size (86 rooms and 23 apartments), this place delivers privacy, too. The local-stone buildings rise up the hillside, retreating modestly into the landscape, blending with the grey-green earth tones of the shrubs and olive trees. The low-rise architecture might at first strike you as too discreet, bland even; not madly inventive. But wait a short while, unjangle from your journey, and it will reveal itself; the design is subtle and soothing. The rooms are sophisticated, elegant, the suites with teak

panelling and cosy rugs, all comforts in place, a pretty view out across the vast blue Aegean. There are 10 places to eat, including Olive Garden for delicate Turkish tapas, salads and grilled fresh fish, and upbeat Kurochan for inventive Japanese dishes (such as tea-smoked lamb with smoky nasu and spicy miso sauce). During its soft opening, staff from the Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok were on hand to demonstrate service at its most impeccable; by this summer the staff should be finetuned and turned up to full beam. FLASH POINT It would be easy to spend a week without ever leaving the tender embrace of the sensational spa and wellness centre. +90 252 311 18 88; www.mandarinoriental.com. Doubles from £180



UK NO. 131, CHELTENHAM

A slice of urban cool in the Cotswolds, this handsome Regency townhouse is the latest from young Brit couple Sam and Georgina Pearman, whose impressive ventures include The Wheatsheaf (a pub-with-rooms where Johnny Rotten once danced on the tables), their own-brewed Bobby Beer, and the 100 Acres organic skincare range. This, their latest boutique hotel, is a quirky creation, designed with meticulous care and a rare flair for colour - just look at the exquisite Moorish-style floor tiles. Everywhere something catches your eye: there are headdresses from Papua New Guinea, David Hockney paintings and a 1940s Brazilian wooden fridge stuffed with foodie treats and wines. Antique doors, exposed brickwork and pendant lights add a touch of industrial-chic New York. After an epic seafood platter or one of 17 different cuts of beef at the Crazy Eights restaurant, flop into bed where a hot-water bottle will be waiting. Bathrooms are superb cocoons, some with double showers, others with antique 875 Rogeat Lyons baths. No wonder Dom Joly moved in when his house flooded. FLASH POINT The private dining rooms are dens of decadence - book well ahead for a party weekend. +44 1242 822939; www.no131.com. Doubles from £170

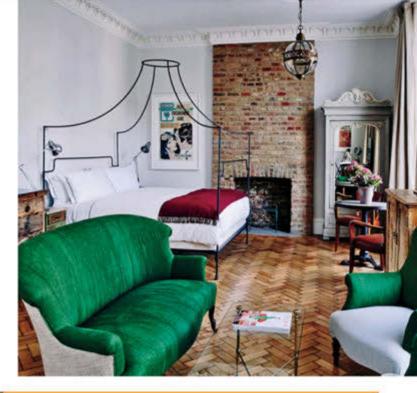




PIMLICO

ARTIST RESIDENCE

The latest Artist Residence (there's one in Penzance and another in Brighton) makes a bright new addition to Pimlico, and has a cracking neighbourhood restaurant to boot. If you knew everyone else staying here, this 10-room townhouse would be the smartest, easiest house-share ever. Natter away to the sweet staff, chill out in the lounge, drink twisted Pisco Sours in the underground cocktail bar or use the private dining room's big wooden table as a desk. Yes, there are playful prints from Shoreditch's Pure Evil Gallery on the wall, but it's the food not the art that steals the show. Chef Michael Bremner's 64 Degrees in Brighton has won great acclaim, and the new London outpost does not disappoint. Chefs blowtorch bananas with one hand and fry lobster gyoza with the other; cabbage leaves are dehydrated for stonking chicken wings with kimchi and blue cheese (a signature dish, and tastier than it sounds), and lamb pinkens perfectly in a water bath. Sit at the copper bar, an arm's stretch from the open kitchen, and wait for your food to be handed to you by the person who cooked it. The theatre doesn't stop there. At breakfast, learn how to make the previous night's heavenly chocolate and hazelnut pudding. FLASH POINT Strait-laced Pimlico just got a hip hit. +44 20 7931 8946; www.artistresidencelondon.co.uk. Doubles from £160







MAYFAIR

THE BEAUMONT

Chris Corbin and Jeremy King have for decades created restaurants - The Ivy, The Wolseley - famous for delivering a glamorous vibe. Their first hotel opened last autumn in a 1926, Grade-II listed former garage just behind Oxford Street. It's named after Jimmy Beaumont, a character from 1930s Prohibition-era New York dreamt up by Corbin & King to set the scene. Indeed, the chequerboard floor and Art Deco-inspired seating in the lobby make it look just like a pre-war gentlemen's club. In wood-panelled Jimmy's Bar, original artworks hang alongside an amazing collection of vintage black and white photographic portraits. Beyond is the Colony Grill Room with its horseshoe-shaped, red-leather banquettes and simple-but-brilliant all-day menu, where New York hot dogs are as revered as the pavé de saumon Parisienne. There's also a tucked-away guest-only bar, a great little spa and hammam, a gym and a hair salon. The bedrooms are classic and elegant, the studios and suites immaculately clad in high-gloss rosewood and home to more vintage photography and original oil portraits. Alternatively, there's Room, the extraordinary, three-story high sculpture by Antony Gormley which juts out from the front of the hotel and houses just one suite. FLASH POINT Check in here for timeless, old-world elegance with a wicked edge. +44 20 7499 1991; www.thebeaumont.com. Doubles from £395

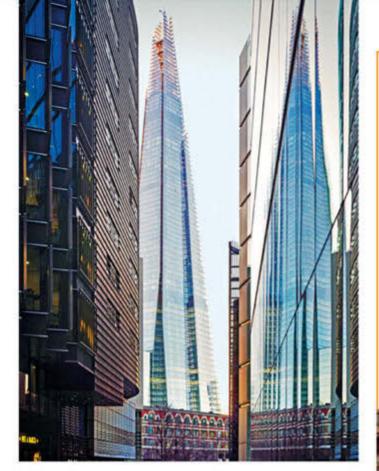


HOLBORN THE HOXTON HOLBORN

The original Hoxton hotel was named after its Shoreditch location, but that's not stopping the fledgling group from taking on the world - Brooklyn, Amsterdam, Paris - starting with Holborn. Housed in a former telephone exchange, it has just what High Holborn needs: a really great lobby. Part cocktail spot, part restaurant, part juice bar, with a retro beauty parlour on one side and a serious coffee shop on the other, it hums day and night. Cool collaborations - Soho House on food (a branch of Chicken Shop, and smarter restaurant Hubbard & Bell) and pampering (Cheeky's), the boys behind Shoreditch Grind on coffee - lends it all a clubby vibe. The (mostly) small rooms are cleverly done, with a covetable yet compact mid-century modern look and sleek black-and-white metro-tiled bathrooms. Artworks are clustered vogueishly on one wall on top of tongue-in-cheek, toile-style wallpaper featuring scenes from Holborn past and present. And curios - a 1950s record-player sideboard, theatre seats, a vintage school desk piled with dusty hardbacks - dotted through what in other hotels are often soulless corridors turns every single moment here into a social-media opportunity. FLASH POINT Clever and cool Hoxton lays claim on Holborn. +44 20 7661 3000; www.thehoxton.com. Doubles from £69







BERMONDSEY

SHANGRI-LA HOTEL AT THE SHARD

Never has a traffic jam on the Old Kent Road looked so enchanting. Occupying the 34th to the 52nd floors of Renzo Piano's 87-floor London landmark, this frankly magnificent hotel does strange things to its occupants. Palms pressed to the windows, you turn to one another in babyish wonder - all day long. Is that distant uprush of green Alexandra Palace, or are my bearings entirely off? See the queue to get into the Tower of London a million miles below! Battleships lie along the Thames like toys. In the distance the Surrey Hills dissolve... and are gone. It's almost a shame the bedrooms (warm, luxuriantly stocked) have any furniture in them at all - anything that might impede the impact of those views. When night falls and the city gets its orange-glowed rest (who could close the blinds?), sitting cross-legged on the bed and gazing out is akin to the sensation of being on a magic carpet. The busy but deeply romantic restaurant, Ting, serves delicate fish and stout meats with an Asian edge, and its star, as she glides between tables topping up glasses, is the amicable young sommelier, Sophie Dumons. In the cocktail bar on the 52nd floor, often literally above the clouds, gin from Battersea is served with an accompanying puff of smoke fragranced with local rosemary. The staff seem as ceaselessly thrilled as everybody else. FLASH POINT The Shard is sheer alchemy, and a startling treat. +44 20 7234 8000; www.shangri-la.com. Doubles from £450

MARYLEBONE

CHILTERN FIREHOUSE

If you haven't heard about Chiltern Firehouse already, you must live in a sealed bubble. A-listers such as Tom Ford, Kate Moss, Nigella Lawson and Kylie Minogue use the restaurant and bar as a canteen, and requests for table reservations reach several thousand a day. But checking into this intimate, 26-room hotel does not feel remotely flashy; it's a bit like staying in a cosy private home with brilliant house staff. There's a 24-hour kitchen, and enormous windows overlook one of London's prettiest streets. There are big bedrooms with gas fireplaces and sexy Sheila Metzner nudes on the walls, and smart marble bathrooms. Old-school rotary telephones advise you to 'Dial O for anything'. This is the world according to owner André Balazs, the American hotelier behind the Chateau Marmont in LA and The Mercer in New York, and style-maker collaborators. It's a model of the kind of spot they want to stay in themselves (Balazs checks into the hotel whenever he is in town). The guest-only Ladder Shed bar is an eminently civilised hideaway, and sitting on a banquette in front of its fire with jazz playing in the background is a sassy way to end any day. FLASH POINT Sample the best of both London worlds: relaxed and peaceful, but with direct access to the hottest scene in town. +44 20 7073 7676; www.chilternfirehouse.com. Doubles from £480



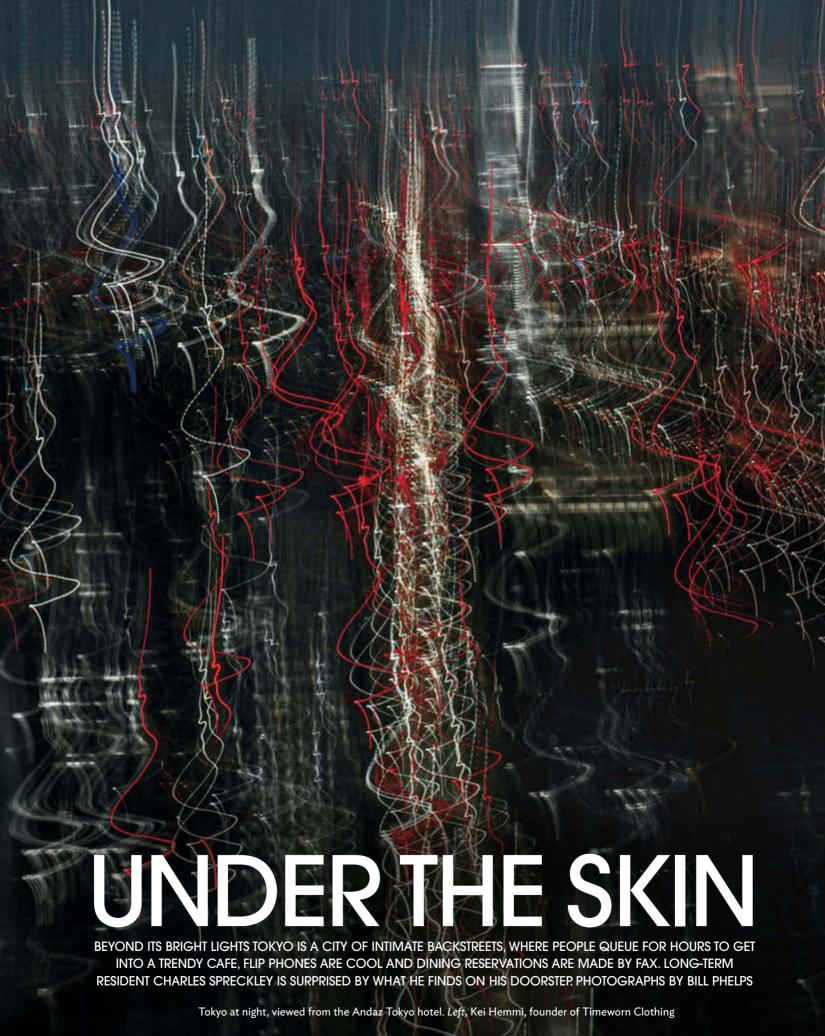
WHAT'S NEXT IN THE CITY?

London's craving for hotel rooms shows no sign of abating with openings in unexpected locations (the nine-bedroom TULSE HILL HOTEL in the far, far south) and expansions (new bedrooms added to THE RITZ and Mayfair's THE ARTS CLUB on Dover Street, due in May). This summer THE LANESBOROUGH will emerge from its recent refurbishment, managed by the superb Oetker Collection (Hôtel du Cap-Eden-Roc in Cap d'Antibes, Le Bristol in Paris, Fregate Island Private in Seychelles) and the two funky

Zetter siblings in Clerkenwell will be joined by the much-anticipated THE ZETTER TOWNHOUSE in increasingly sassy Marylebone. Over in Notting Hill, THE LASLETT HOTEL will open in July with 51 bedrooms, the latest addition to the design-led Living Rooms portfolio (very smart serviced apartments in Mayfair, Little Venice and Marylebone) and, further down the line, American brands THE STANDARD and GANSEVOORT are set to launch in King's Cross and Shoreditch respectively.

REPORTS FROM: Ann Abel, Ralph Bestic, Rodney Bolt, Jane Broughton, Peter Browne, Karen Burshtein, Chris Caldicott, Vassi Chamberlain, Horatio Clare, Ondine Cohane, Teresa Levonian Cole, Sophie Dening, Guy Dittrich, Daisy Finer, Giles Foden, Andy Friedlander, Lanie Goodman, Lisa Grainger, Victoria Higgins, Lauren Holmes, Fiona Kerr, Steve King, Emma Love, Hazel Lubbock, Mary Lussiana, Dominic Lutyens, Lee Marshall, Kate Maxwell, Aoife O'Riordain, Ed Peters, Antonia Quirke, Charles Runnette, Anthony Sattin, Sally Shalam, Alix Sharkey, Sarah Spankie, Charles Spreckley, Tara Stevens, Nicky Swallow, Francesca Syz, Nigel Tisdall, Bonnie Tsui, Claire Wrathall







OR YEARS PEOPLE used to tell me about the Button Bar. You have to go. It's so amazing, so unique, so Tokyo. Don't you live near there? That's where it is. I can't believe you've never been.

I was embarrassed. I had a reputation. I was the one who knew everything about Tokyo, the person friends-of-friends-of-friends would call when they were lost or wanted to find something. Secretly, in the dead of night, I typed it into Google Maps: 'button bar tokyo'. The map zoomed, the pixels focused, and it all looked very familiar: that's my street.

Still wearing my pyjamas, I stood on the balcony and looked across the road towards my favourite yakitori restaurant – fine purveyor of curious skewered chicken organs and ice-cold beers – and scanned up the pencil-like building floor-by-floor: yakitori joint, lawyer's office, English school, record shop, Irish pub... and a sign with a little red button.

The amazing-unique bar was less than 20 metres from my own home. I had walked past it a thousand times – eaten beneath it just a week ago – but I never looked up.

Tokyo is a city not of lines, but of layers – above and below, front and back, public and private – a city where the streets are rarely straight and mostly nameless, and where addresses are organised in circles and written in reverse. Even taxi drivers aren't expected to know where they are going. For a country with obsessive-compulsive tendencies, Tokyo feels fundamentally haphazard.

Some call Tokyo an ugly city, although I beg to differ. Granted, with few grand vistas and little unifying architectural style, it lacks both the palatial perfection of Paris or the intimidating canyons of New York City. But Tokyo has its own compelling narrative: a cyclical story of destruction and rebirth. In its bones of concrete, wood and steel, it has the DNA of survival. Its people do, too.

Over the last 100 years Tokyo has not once but twice experienced almost total destruction: first at the hands of nature (the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923), and then by humankind (the firebombing of World War II). In Japan, permanence can never be assumed.

Few of the brick structures of the early 20th century remain, and those that do – such as the Tokyo Station building – are renovated as ambrosially as a Disneyland attraction. Post-war buildings are easier to spot: drab, utilitarian, thrown up at a time when Japan had little time or money to spend on a pretty design. However, by the 1980s – the so-called Bubble Era – the tables had turned: the country was awash with cash and ambition, and its buildings got bigger, louder, or just more expensive.

Today, once again, Tokyo is rebounding from another set of disasters, the earthquake and tsunami of March 2011. The city was largely unscathed – people just 200km away were much less fortunate – but the authorities love nothing more than a good excuse to get the concrete mixers churning. After what the Japanese modestly call a 'difficult few years',

the economy is on the mend and people are feeling confident. Japan, as the prime minister likes to tell people, is back.

Through good times and bad Tokyo has consistently felt like a wealthy place. Foreign guests, conditioned by negative economic headlines to expect a culture in terminal decay, discover instead a city so ordered and intact that even a one-minute train delay is deemed worthy of an apology, and where petty crime is so low that a lost wallet will almost certainly be returned – cash included – within hours.

More often than I can remember, I have been surprised by the kindness of strangers. There was the time I unknowingly overpaid my bus fare, so the driver pulled into a layby and walked back to return some coins. And just a few weeks ago, a taxi driver turned up at my door in the middle of the night to give me back a bag I didn't even know I'd lost.

ENTER THE MATRIX

In my 16 years of calling Tokyo home, I have lived all over the city, but the Yoyogiuehara area is dearest to me – one of hundreds of distinct neighbourhoods, each as cosy as a village and cobbled together to form a vast metropolis of 35 million people. My favourite pastime is to wander aimlessly through the narrow backstreets that carve up the urban sprawl into bite-size chunks, making new discoveries at every turn: a trendy slow-drip coffee shop above a tiny fashion boutique behind a workshop for tatami mats next to an old family-run noodle shop.

The neighbouring district of Kamiyamacho is especially exciting for food right now, with a new café, bar or restaurant popping up every week. They include Ahiru Store, a wine bar and bakery with just eight seats, and Shibuya Cheese Stand, which makes top-grade mozzarella and ricotta several times a day, served on pizzas or in sandwiches. Pignon is a personal favourite. Chef Rimpei Yoshikawa is typical of his generation: unreservedly hospitable and very cool. After dabbling in formal dining in Tokyo and in France, Yoshikawa changed tack and opened a casual bistro serving food inspired by his travels in Morocco: cuminand-beetroot salad, venison with roasted figs, spicy lamb sausages.

Of all Tokyo's districts, none has more faces than Asakusa. Once known for its expansive 'pleasure quarters', the area is also home to the capital's oldest temple, Senso-ji. Every day, thousands of visitors walk along the avenue leading to the temple, but very few explore one block back. If they did, they would discover, squeezed incongruously in between two colourless concrete structures, a two-storey wooden house uprooted 50 years ago from a town in the mountains and replanted in the city as a small kaiseki restaurant, Waentei Kikko. The owner, Kodai Fukui, is an accomplished player of the three-stringed Japanese guitar known as *tsugaru shamisen*.

'When I found this old teahouse, I had a strong feeling I couldn't let it disappear and just be replaced with another







concrete tower,' says Fukui, who has performed on television and abroad, and whose father was also a famous musician. 'We cannot just let all our traditions go.'

Every neighbourhood has its secrets – even Ginza, with its grand boulevards and promenades. Duck down an opening beside some vending machines to find a large white-and-blue curtain covering a locked door with a buzzer. Inside and upstairs is Sushi Ichi, where Masakazu Ishibashi serves daringly innovative dishes in a district where most chefs steadfastly stick to tradition.

'Being in Ginza means I can keep one eye on the past and the other on the future,' says Ishibashi, who comes from a family of sushi chefs and spent several years in California. 'I don't think I break traditions. All I do is try to express myself.' Dishes such as hairy-crab risotto steamed inside the crab shell with sea urchin and sushi rice, served with a topping of salmon roe, is emblematic of his creativity. But it's the simple nigiri sushi of which he is most proud, and rightly so.

NEW ORDER

One of the fascinating layers in contemporary Tokyo culture is a generational one. The young people making their mark today are free-spirited and open to questioning established ways. They are talented individuals, no doubt about that. They also reflect how much Japanese society has changed.

The 20 years of economic stagnation that Japan slogged through starting in the early 1990s are commonly called its 'lost decades'. From a cultural perspective, much was actually gained. People who once would have joined Japan Inc's punishing rat race, submitting themselves to corporate servitude as a matter of course rather than choice, were forced to think about what they really wanted to do with their lives. For many, the answer was to break out on their own.

Zaiyu Hasegawa is the freshest face among a generation of exciting young chefs transforming Tokyo's dining scene. His restaurant, Jimbocho Den, is extraordinary. Hasegawa's mother was a geisha, and hospitality is in his blood. Even though he grew up surrounded by tradition, his food expresses his own irreverent character in spades: one unorthodox dessert is served in a garden trowel. Joking aside, Hasegawa is deadly serious about food. His menus showcase Japan's finest seasonal ingredients: cuts of the best wagyu beef on rice in June, or tender fillets of autumnal sanma fish with gingko nuts in October. Each dish is presented on a stunning piece of pottery, chosen by Hasegawa's friend Kenshin Sato, whose tiny store, Utsuwa Kenshin – a Tardis-sized trove of ceramics by up-and-coming Japanese artisans – is also worth hunting down.

Hasegawa is an Instagram addict. He uploads selfies with his customers – Noma's René Redzepi has been more than once – portraits of his pet Chihuahua called Pucci, and photos of Sunday jaunts to his favourite coffee shop.

With a following of almost cult-like intensity, Omotesando Koffee is the brainchild of Eiichi Kunitomo, Japan's most successful barista-entrepreneur. Located inside an old house with a bonsai tree in one corner, it was only supposed to exist in its present form for a year or two – the property was slated for demolition.

'The owners really liked what we've done with the space, so they let us stay a bit longer,' says Kunitomo as he makes one of his famously silky iced cappuccinos. He isn't shy about sharing his secrets, such as why he refuses to compress his grinds like most other baristas. 'The taste retains a softer shape if the granules have room to breathe,' he explains.

Despite the generosity of the landlord, the existential threat to Omotesando Koffee is typical of the pressures faced by many









independent businesses. Property prices are rising again, and developers have an insatiable hunger for low-yielding land ripe for conversion. Entire neighbourhoods are being refashioned, organic communities replaced with towers and piazzas. Powerful people call this progress: spatially more efficient, say the developers; safer in an earthquake, say their political friends. Others worry that the very fabric of the city is being ripped to shreds. Bohemian Shimokitazawa, for example, once the Williamsburg of Tokyo, has been dismembered by a massive infrastructure project that's seen its ramshackle railway station ripped out, soon to be replaced by an unimaginative glass-and-steel box evocative of nowhere. A grassroots organisation called Save the Shimokitazawa has been powerless to stop it.

'Worrying about change in Tokyo is a fool's errand,' the late Donald Richie, the famous author and observer of the city's society, once said. 'You might as well complain about the weather.'

UP THE TEMPO

The construction lobby has been strengthened since Tokyo won its bid to host the summer Olympic Games in 2020 for the second time. The first Tokyo Olympiad in 1964 was a catalyst for an unbelievably rapid five-year makeover that trumpeted Japan's renaissance after World War II. Even today, the infrastructure built for those games – the expressways winding improbably between buildings and above rivers; and the *shinkansen*, or Bullet Train, that whisks people to and from the capital – are the veins and arteries that keep Tokyo moving.

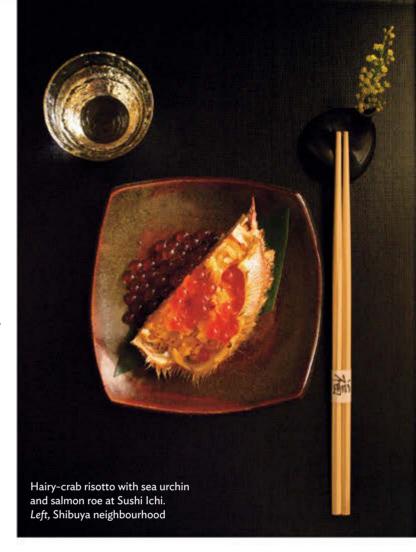
And so it will be again: the government is determined to use Japan's summer games to showcase a country that looks strong and confident. In its eyes, that means new skyscrapers, train stations and, yes, roads – with the currently-under-construction Loop Road No. 2 reportedly to be rebranded as Olympic Road, linking the stadium to the athletes' village.

For a glimpse of what Tokyo 2020 might look like, one need only travel a short distance along Olympic Road to Toranomon, a long-overlooked district of tired shops and faceless office blocks. They now exist in the shadow of the second tallest building in the capital, the pinnacle of a mixed-use development called Toranomon Hills (branding tagline: 'The Future of Tokyo Begins Here'), the newest development from the city's most ambitious property company, Mori Building.

Previous Mori projects were criticised for being too focused on luxury – pricey shops, unaffordable apartments, elitist art exhibitions – at a time when conspicuous consumption was going out of fashion. This one, however, strikes a note that is more in tune with the times, with morning yoga sessions, evening music concerts in the park and quality food. The seven highest floors of the main tower are occupied by the Andaz Tokyo hotel, which brings smart-casual service to a five-star property in Tokyo for the first time.

'People are getting used to it. We need to educate them,' says general manager Arnaud de Saint-Exupéry, who opened the very first Andaz in London before relocating to Tokyo.

The other new entrant is the Aman Tokyo, which opened last December (see HOT LIST review on page 90), bringing intimate luxury to a city starved of world-class boutique hotels. Established brands have to step up their game. The Okura Hotel, whose retro lobby was used in the James Bond film *You Only Live Twice*, will close its historic main building later this year and construct a newer, bigger one by 2019. Even the Mandarin Oriental Tokyo, which is barely 10 years old, is having



a revamp and opening The Pizza Bar on 38th to build on the success of Sora, the cosy sushi restaurant across the lobby.

So much change inevitably creates an air of optimism. Coming after several difficult years, the turnaround is very welcome. The challenge for the bureaucrats, as they make sweeping decisions that will change the face of Tokyo for a generation, is to temper the excitement of development with the urgency of preservation.

Minoru Mori, the property tycoon and patriarch of Mori Building who passed away in 2012, once told me in an interview that there was almost nowhere in Tokyo – except for parks and temples – he would not like to see ripped out and rebuilt according to his own vision of what the city should be. That included opening up more green spaces, and getting rid of long commutes by helping people to live closer to where they work. His goals were admirable. But those of us who love Tokyo hope they can be achieved in a way that preserves the sense of intimacy that is the city's priceless but intangible asset.

FLASH FORWARD

The day after I discovered where the Button Bar was I went for a drink. It didn't take long – about 10 paces across the street and six floors up in a lift. I liked it, although I have no idea why it was called Button – probably because of the speed at which it closed about two months later.

But I have a new recommendation: Gen Yamamoto, a bar owned and operated by a mixologist of the same name. Watching Yamamoto work, patiently crafting his original cocktails and serving them with the elegance of a tea ceremony, is an amazing experience. So unique. So Tokyo.

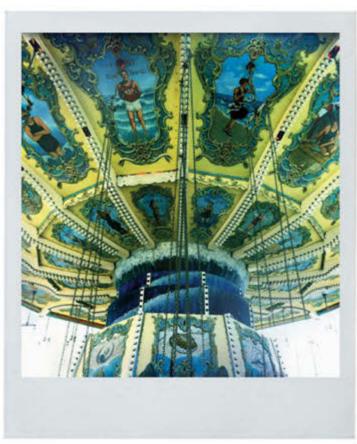
Good luck finding it.





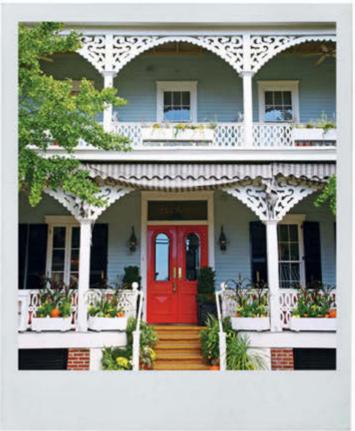
FAIRCROUND

The primary-coloured Jersey Shore is as all-American as Bruce Springsteen, its Born







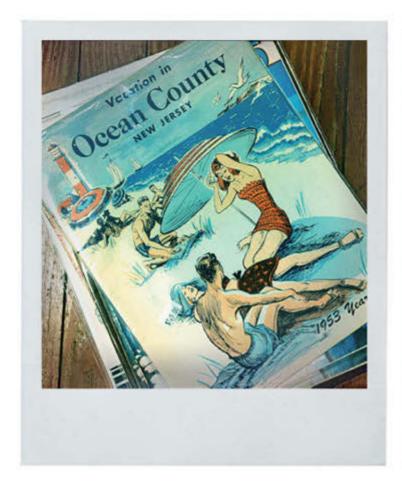


ATTRACTION

in the USA son. Antonia Quirke pledges allegiance. Photographs by Caroline West









Y TERRITORY RUNS from the top of Asbury Park to the bottom of Cape May.' So says *Boardwalk Empire*'s Prohibition-era gangster hero Nucky Thompson, king of

the USA's infamous Jersey Shore, a unique stretch of seaside incorporating every fun and crazy thing, from 19th-century lobster shacks to down-and-dirty pinball alleys, that starts an hour south of New York City and continues 100 miles to the very tip of New Jersey where the Atlantic Ocean meets Delaware Bay. Forty resort towns, each with its own stroll of wooden boardwalk; beaches and stalls, funfairs and guesthouses. Neptune City. Avalon. Sea Girt. White sand bordering million-dollar mansions giving way to faded Deco blocks and Fifties doo-wop motels. Some towns are madly kitsch, some charming as hell, and most have been here since the 1850s when doctors in Philadelphia started to persuade patients about the health benefits of the sea. I love the Shore and have been coming here every summer on and off for the last 20 years. I especially love that the beach holiday wasn't invented in Malibu or St Tropez but in New Jersey, the gum-chewing, blue-collar state where baseball also began and the record player was invented, along with the drive-in movie and the lightbulb. Ah, the Dionysian potential of American life!

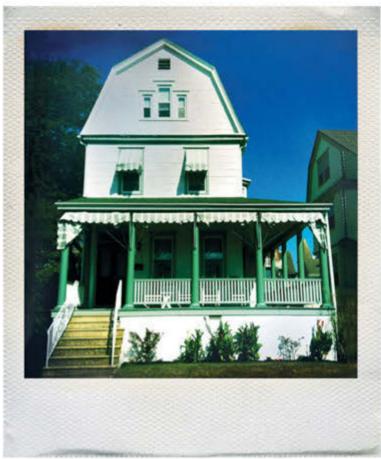
CAPE MAY

Drop to the southernmost point of the Shore and you'll find its unsung answer to the Hamptons. Cape May, once home to the Kechemeche Indians, was first spotted in 1609 by the captain of

a Dutch sailing vessel and by the early 1870s was a cherished seaside resort. By the 1970s the little coastal town was supersedate, creakingly historic and, frankly, deserted. A friend of mine worked here as a waiter then, in his teens, polishing cutlery in a too-quiet diner, humming along to Fleetwood Mac's 'Hypnotized' on the radio while the manager patted her curls, both dreaming of razzier places further up the coast. On the walls, pictures of Cape May summers long past: guests in bonnets gathered around tables of lemonade and dice; lifeguards, belts white as starch, smiling at mothers with shy, ribboned daughters; local boys curing a hangover with coffee and cognac in the 1920s. Then you could buy up a whole house here, abandoned and full of furniture, in a garden exploding with cow parsley and hawthorns, for a few hundred dollars.

Today the town is carefully renovated (some houses date back to 1650), with Victorian turreted mini-mansions, immaculate clapboard hotels and sweetly various B&Bs, painted pink and pea-green, and all within walking distance of a broad, white beach. In the holidays, over sun-cracked picket fences, 10-year-olds sell iced tea from jugs next to piles of dimes for change, and people sit out on their porches all afternoon and evening. It's a clubbable town, dainty, winningly eccentric – the tacos place on Sunset Boulevard with its large shrine to Ernest Hemingway; the ice-cream stall that hands out notices for lectures on Freud. There's a tomato festival which has no tomatoes to speak of, only earthenware birds' nests and boxes of rusting lapel pins. With the sea running on one side of the town









Clockwise from top left: salt-water taffy; a clapboard house on Beach Avenue, Cape May; the Great White rollercoaster, Wildwood; cabanas in Cape May. Opposite from left: vintage magazines; the Boiler Room bar at Congress Hall. Previous pages, clockwise from top left: a sign in Wildwood; the Virginia Hotel porch; fake palm trees, Wildwood; the Virginia Hotel; parasols on Cape May beach; Congress Hall pool; frozen custard; Morey's Piers, Wildwood





THE SMELL HERE IS OF SALTINESS. SALT DRYING RINGS

and salt marshes along the other, Cape May's outlying long roads are lined with cedars rustling with tiny hummingbirds. Sweetbay magnolia, richly fragrant honeysuckle, blue mistflower and foxglove beardtongue. When in 2013 the Hamptons were officially declared too developed, too much of a party scene, the wise of Cape May turned their pushbikes windward and watched the Atlantic pour bean-green near the lighthouse at the southern tip of the resort, the Point, where there is nobody on the pristine beach, even during cherry-coloured sunsets.

At the famed and imposing Congress Hall hotel, extended families of guests share sun lotion and gossip and a general pervasive sense of well-being, sitting on rocking chairs and pausing to read the New Jersey Star-Ledger or stretch their legs down the long, lawn-fronted veranda that has been here since 1816 and feels sheltered like a cloister. Presidents Pierce, Buchanan, Grant and Harrison stayed at Congress Hall between the 1850s and 1880s. Sometimes the whole White House (200 miles away) would decamp to the hotel for August. Enormous and pristine, it has original bricks painted a sugary yellow; the endless sea-bright corridors and mottled, dim mirrors overlook an Atlantic that regularly bursts with dolphins. This afternoon, well-to-do New Jersey families and couples on honeymoon watch as teenagers haul whopping suitcases up steps and chefs hand out lobster salads. It's the week before Labor Day and absolutely nothing is happening, the New York Times casting around for diverting stories and reporting on a snow leopard born at the Bronx Zoo. Sunlight drenches guests in bright shards. Lunch is steamed clams and corn. A

delivery man pulls a small cart of freckled mangoes past a hibiscus bush. After a few days of this, time becomes mere background noise. As staff absentmindedly clean glasses in the cool gloom of a ballroom after a wedding, their dreamy gaze, like everybody else's, is perpetually drawn not just towards the striped hotel cabanas on the sands but to the sand itself, which actually glints with miniscule Cape May diamonds: polished quartz stones washed 200 miles down the Delaware River and propelled onto the beaches by the tides. The Kechemeche used them for jewellery and traded the stones with other tribes, but now New Jersey children sift through the dunes all afternoon for larger morsels, trudging home in the evening with pockets drooping, turning them out onto tables like pirates gloating over an Arabic treasury.

On a storm-close, late-August afternoon I cycle towards Ocean Drive, part of the old state highway before they built the Garden State Parkway, cutting through the salt marshes. I pass the shops for clairvoyants that you find on the outskirts of every New Jersey town, the marine-junk stores and bait stands advertising squid and blood and minnows, suggesting that serious fishing is to be had: striped bass and bluefish, black sea bass and summer flounder. A slight, hot breeze kicks in as the road stretches down through the marshes. Unfeasibly tall sea oats tremble with bellowing frogs. The occasional crane – startlingly white – stares intently into dark water. Even the names around here make me think of whaling captains and ghosts: Snug Harbor, Mill Creek. A distant, faceless person squats with a net fishing for crabs and I toil further, past a





ONTO SKIN. HAIR FRIZZED INTO GYPSY MADNESS

crab shack marked by a gigantic wooden sailor. The smell along this road is hard to describe. My fifty-something friend Rachel says that this is the smell of summer, the smell of youth, and is as immediate and eye-lollingly potent to her as the smell of damp in a cupboard is to me, bringing with it childhood memories of holiday cottages in the Lake District. Cape May's smell is of a deep and ancient organic saltiness. Salt drying white rings onto the skin. Clothes rigid and double-thick with it. Hair frizzed into gypsy madness. Even the honey here has a slight salinity, a delicious and unexpected kick that is almost imperceptible but keeps you pouring it addictively onto spoons and fingers to taste it again until your heart thumps with all the gorging sweetness.

Later that night a moon-bright, John Carpenter fog crawls to shore and cossets my window, and I am mesmerised. All I can see is the soaked American flag wrapped around the hotel's lawn pole and the shrouded houses along Beach Avenue. An occasional light glows very low in a top room, the mist eventually shutting out all senses, all noise, thickening everything into the deep-green silence you get in those dreams when you rise and float soundlessly about. By dawn the spell breaks a little and a few joggers start bouncing across the lawn below. The pool boy emerges and pulls up his white socks. Snug against the retreating fog, Cape May feels even more of a safehold, perpetually lost in a trance. Its mellow glamour and slightly

melancholy American dottiness obtains all the way down to the very end of the shore, even to the elderly nuns in the convent of St Mary-by-the-Sea at Cape May Point. Here they sit, year-round on their porch, dressed in blue surfers' shirts, nodding their thanks to passing whales and porpoises and enjoying the sibilant pleasure of bare feet on old boards, the damp rolling off their eyebrows.

ASBURY PARK

So, this is where it all starts. Where Jack Nicholson and Philip Roth and Frank Sinatra all visited as kids. A town with a buzzing boardwalk of almost a mile long and a promenade built in 1880. For 10 years the town fathers argued over the building of a convention hall which was finished in 1930, just in time for the Depression. Designed by the architect of Grand Central Station, here it remains, enormous and slightly dilapidated, festooned with plaster lighthouses and grinning serpents. Nearby, in a little shack called the Temple of Knowledge, a famous clairvoyant once predicted a great future for local boy Bruce Springsteen as he stood with outstretched palm. There is to Asbury Park, with its paranormal museum and annual zombie walk, the spirit of the snake-oil salesman, of the strange, that you find in Coney Island, where fire-eaters share rooms with the Human Blockhead as he drives nails smilingly into his nose. At the far end of the boardwalk, past stalls for beach fries and sugared

Above from left: a ride at the amusement park on Morey's Piers in Wildwood; Hooked Up Seafood in the town. Opposite, from left: a Hollywood-esque sign on the beachfront in Wildwood; the lobby of Congress Hall, a historic hotel in Cape May



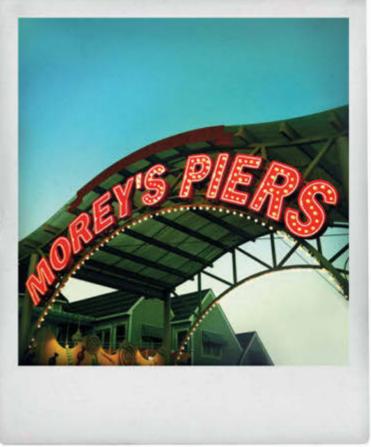






Clockwise from top left: a ride on Morey's Piers; a view of seagulls from under a Congress Hall hotel parasol in Cape May; a maritime-themed sign in the town; the façade of Jim's Bait and Tackle shop in Cape May. Opposite, from left: a rollercoaster in Wildwood; Morey's Piers in lights





peanuts and a pinball museum full of coloured machines dating back 60 years, a once-spectacular wrought-iron casino stands, a relic of past glories and human frivolity, gazing Ozymandias-like across the ocean. Inside, a lone cellist busks the *Bach Suite IV*.

OCEAN GROVE

An immaculately maintained town looked after for more than 144 years by the Camp Meeting Association, where in summer Methodists pitched their tents and took part in revivalist meetings. They still do. 'Enter these gates with Thanksgiving' it says at the entrance to the town, where from Memorial Day to September tiny white-canvas tents strung with bunting house the cheerfully devout assiduously attending choir practice and workshops on English Paper Piecing and calligraphy. It's a dry town even now; those feeling hungover from general Shore excess visit to walk the gentle, picture-book clapboard streets and watch, holding nothing more intoxicating than a bubblegum ice cream, as the band Air Supply performs 'All Out of Love' in the Great Auditorium. But it's Nagle's Apothecary Café that must be visited, a classic diner-in-a-pharmacy still selling Damschinsky 1920s hair dye and egg creams – milk, seltzer and chocolate syrup – essentially a fizzy milkshake drawn through a soda fountain. On the wall hangs a dusty-framed and decades-faded signed photograph of Montgomery Clift taken in the days before Elizabeth Taylor had even heard of Richard Burton.

WILDWOOD

This is pure unadulterated Americana shore. A boardwalk two miles long and 20ft wide clamours with novelty bikinis, deepfried Oreos and stalls doling out shrimps and littleneck clams,

candy apples and salt-water taffy. Children, ketchup-encrusted, skin baked two-tone by the reliable NJ summer sun, run sticky fingers along stands selling cheese dogs and sausage heroes, buttered corn and tortillas rolled with pork and raw onion. Here, despite the tumult, you can find unspoilt beaches as far as the eye can see and three piers housing funfairs that look, at dusk, like lighted treasure boxes, the various ferris wheels and rollercoasters stretching out like the bones of some prehistoric beast. The Great White, the Moby Dick, the Human Slingshot. The creaking of the Sea Serpent rollercoaster as the carriage clambers upwards, chains and cogs groaning, before hurtling to the floor at 60mph and then that fantastic sensation, the nauseating dimpling of the ground as we spring away. For a while in the 1950s and 1960s, people stopped going to Cape May so enraptured were they by the fun at Wildwood, and Ocean Avenue is a testament to that heyday, with its string of perfectly preserved motels: the Astronaut, the Shalimar, the Waikiki and the Pan American, with a rotating globe on its roof like a blazon of summer fun and busyness.

WHERE TO STAY

Congress Hall

The best and most beautiful hotel in Cape May, it is achingly historic (it was burned to the ground in the Great Fire of 1878 and then rebuilt) and right on the sand. www.caperesorts.com. Doubles from about £95

The Virginia Hotel

Set in a 1879 landmark building with just 24 snug rooms on a tree-lined street in the town centre. Sit out on the porch with an iced tea. www. caperesorts.com. Doubles from about £90









Above, embroidered jacket, £1,265, **Dries Van Noten** (www.harveynichols.com). Tajik bikini, £129 for the set, **SOFIA by Vix** (www.beachcafe.com). Cotton dungarees, £560, **Sacai Luck** (www.selfridges. com). Cone necklace, £342, **Eddie Borgo** (www.matchesfashion.com). Tassel prayer necklaces, £140 each, **PB Jewellery** (www.pb-jewellery.com). Bronze cuff, £370, **Annelise Michelson** (www.annelisemichelson.com). Leather belt, £710, **Hedi Slimane for Saint Laurent** (www.ysl.com). Wyatt sandals, £375, **Jimmy Choo** (www.jimmychoo.com)

Opposite, vintage jacket, £150, **Rokit** (www.rokit.co.uk). Embroidered dress, £2,360, **Chloé** (www.chloe.com). Cone bracelet, £247, **Eddie Borgo** (as before). De-Con ring, £95, **Maria Black** (www.maria-black.com). Isabella anklet, £49, **Grace Bijoux** (www.gracebijoux.com.au)

Previous pages, muslin shirt, £490, **Gucci** (www.gucci.com). Bikini bottoms, £120, **Ward Whillas** (www.wardwhillas.com). Leather boots, £1,478, **Givenchy** (www.givenchy.com). Vintage jacket, £220, **Beyond Retro** (www.beyondretro.com). Spike Veruna earring, £40, **Maria Princesa** (www.mariaprincesa.com)



Above, silk coat £3,700; cotton quilted shorts, £860, both **Dior** (www.dior.com). Isabella anklets, £49 each, **Grace Bijoux** (www.gracebijoux.com.au)

Opposite, suede shirt, £5,385, **Chanel** (www.chanel.com). Leather fringe skirt, £2,290, **Tom Ford** (www.tomford.com). Aladdin pendant necklace, £157, **Maria Black** (www.maria-black.com). Gold-plated rings, from £50 each, **PB Jewellery** (www.pb-jewellery.com)





Above, military jacket, £2,720, **Gucci** (www.gucci.com). Denim Pixie dress, £295, **Alexa Chung for AG jeans** (www.mytheresa.com). Aladdin pendant necklace, £157, **Maria Black** (www.maria-black.com)

Opposite, silk fringe bolero, £950, **Tim Ryan** (www.avenue32.com). Stretch suede trousers, £890, **Polo Ralph Lauren** (www.ralphlauren.com). Spike earrings, £244, **Maria Black** (as before)





Above, plunge-neck swimsuit, £475, Chanel (www.chanel.com). Brass Anja shoulder chain, £35, Grace Bijoux (www.gracebijoux.com.au)

Opposite, Spencer officer jacket, £2,565, **Hedi Slimane for Saint Laurent** (www.ysl.com). Guipure top, £840, **Chloé** (www.chloe.com). Phoebe denim shorts, £185, **MiH Jeans** (www.mih-jeans.com). Plume earring, £230, **Eddie Borgo** (www.matchesfashion.com). Detour rings, £73 each, **Maria Black** (www.maria-black.com). Angelia anklets, £44 each; cowry-shell Talulah leg chain, £22, both **Grace Bijoux** (as before)

Hair, **Paul Merritt** at De Facto using Moroccanoil. Make-up, **Ruth Warrior** at Lovely Management, using Lancôme. Model, **Ana Beatriz Barros** at Next Models. Fashion assistant, **Connie Chamberlayne**. Nails, Quartz Vernis (used throughout) **Chanel** (as before). With thanks to **Uxua Casa Hotel** (www.uxua.com), which has doubles from about £640





AHEAD OF THE CURVE

DANISH FURNITURE IS SO DESIRABLE IT HAS GRACED THE BOTTOMS OF CHRISTINE KEELER AND KATE MOSS. BUT WHERE SHOULD YOU GO TO DISCOVER THE NEXT DESIGN ICONS? WRITER AND COMEDIAN DAISY DONOVAN SHOPS AROUND IN COPENHAGEN. PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHEW BUCK







ONCE I HAD DECIDED to go to Copenhagen, conversations all went exactly the same way. 'Copenhagen? I'd love to go there. Never been. Did you watch The Killing... Borgen...The Bridge?' Like most of my interrogators, I had been obsessed with Danish noir, but I had never thought of visiting Copenhagen. It just seemed slightly other; it didn't have the allure of Paris or Rome, and thanks to those series, felt somehow sinister, chilling. Worryingly, what drew me to it in the end was not an enlightened spirit of adventure but the need to decorate my house. Every single piece of furniture I found or hankered after was Danish. I'd trawl Pinterest for ideas and constantly find myself searching for people who had that slash through the 'o' in their name. Even little stationery boxes, or kitchen brooms I picked up in John Lewis, were from Denmark. Enough was enough. I heard the siren call.

An equal fan, but with much higher aesthetic qualifications than me, was my friend the architect Tom Bartlett. We decided we would do a weekend trip to 'Cooperharger', as I like to refer to it, but touristing was not on our agenda, only hunting for items of exceptional visual pleasure. Being prescriptive about our remit was incredibly freeing. I speak as the child of a family who renounced the Lord in favour of the Michelin Green Guide. My introduction to any European city was accompanied by the hushed tones of my mother whispering historical dates at me like a nun saying her prayers – urgently and incoherently. But Tom and I were chucking out the conventional sightseer tomes and going with a healthy list of must-see design places and not much more.

Copenhagen is so, so close. Oddly so. I barely had time to open the on-board duty-free guide. Which was a cruel blow. Obviously we expected rain. Do you remember ever seeing a ray of sunshine in those series? I can't tell you how surreal it was to find a cerulean sky, the sun shining, trams, riverboats and outdoor cafés, and people merrily cycling with their children. It made me want to whistle. And then I remembered, Hans

Christian Andersen laid claim to this place first, and it definitely owes more to him than to Danish noir. There was what I can only describe as chirpiness in the air; a jauntiness to the way people carried themselves. The ticket man, the taxi driver, the bell boy, the concierge, even the street sweeper – everyone was cheery.

I stayed at the extremely smart Hotel d'Angleterre, a 200-year-old grande dame in the centre of town. It's the go-to place for every celebrity and head of state you can think of, but it exudes a quiet dignity. A study in grey, white and purple, it has a spa imagined by Space CPH, Denmark's leading architects, and it shows. Tom was bedding down at a new boutique hotel, SP34, that had a more avant-garde feel, but for sheer comfort and a casual Michelin-starred restaurant, the d'Angleterre won my vote. I also liked the fact that when we asked them how to get to Tom's hotel, which seemed a very, very long way away, no one would hear of us taking a taxi. Our options were to walk or to cycle. I kept pointing at the distance on the map, despairingly, hoping that they had misunderstood us, but since everyone speaks perfect English, it was clear - we were on our bikes.

There are bicycle hire stores all over town. There is actual built-up pavement between the roads and the cycle paths here, so that even small children are safe from the traffic. Walking is also rather pleasurable. Stroget is the longest pedestrianised area in Europe. The main street, Ostergarde, is also car-free, which makes for very easy wandering and, even though it is lined with big brand names, it doesn't feel that commercial or have the craziness of Oxford Street or the Champs Elysées. Crime in Copenhagen is minimal, so that sense of being new prey to street thieves really isn't there. So much so that at the Bang & Olufsen flagship store, its brand-new £7,000 speaker – a circular creation on legs - was thumping out music, out on the street, unchained to anything. Admittedly, it would be a slow getaway, but still... it gave me a certain faith in the people of the city.

We drew up a list of shops we felt we had to see and started at HAY – three floors of stationery, storage

Above: lighting at Illums Bolighus, inside the department store, and some of its tableware. Right, Geist restaurant





From top left: a display at Louis Poulsen lighting store; Stilleben cushions; vintage furniture at Dansk Møbelkunst. Opposite, clockwise from top left: the manager of Balthazar Champagne bar; interiors shop Københavns Møbelsnedkeri; HAY figurines; The Apartment design outlet; HAY furniture; the lobby of the Hotel d'Angleterre

and furniture. Sherbet-coloured notepads are piled high on trestle tables. The furniture has a Sixties/Arne Jacobsen simplicity to it (but so does most of the furniture in Copenhagen). What sets it apart is the sense of buying into the HAY ethos. It's like a Scandinavian Habitat, but miles better. Everything goes with everything, no matter if it's a pencil sharpener or a cupboard.

Illums Bolighus, by contrast, is like The Conran Shop on crack. Every imaginable object of desire is stuffed into this furniture department store. Loyal to Danish designers but also retailing international pieces, it's a bit of an embarrassment of riches. Tom and I decided furniture needs room to breathe to really appeal to a buyer. Cram it in and pile it high, and you can't really judge what it would look like in a room.

If Illums doesn't grab you, Designer Zoo is a new concept store with changing exhibits and seven active workshops, and stylists and artists working as salespeople. Then there's the beautiful little homeware shop, Stilleben. Specialising in ceramics, but with an eclectic mix of rugs and prints too, it is a less overwhelming prospect than the big stores, but showcases equal discernment. Luckily, right nearby, just as we were flagging, was Summerbird, a gourmet chocolatier. If you are going to indulge when in Copenhagen, this is the spot to go to. There were so many tastes and colours, it looked as though the Sugar Plum Fairy had been casual with her

TALL HANDSOME MEN WEARING SHORTS ABOVE THE KNEE. IT WAS OVERWHELMING

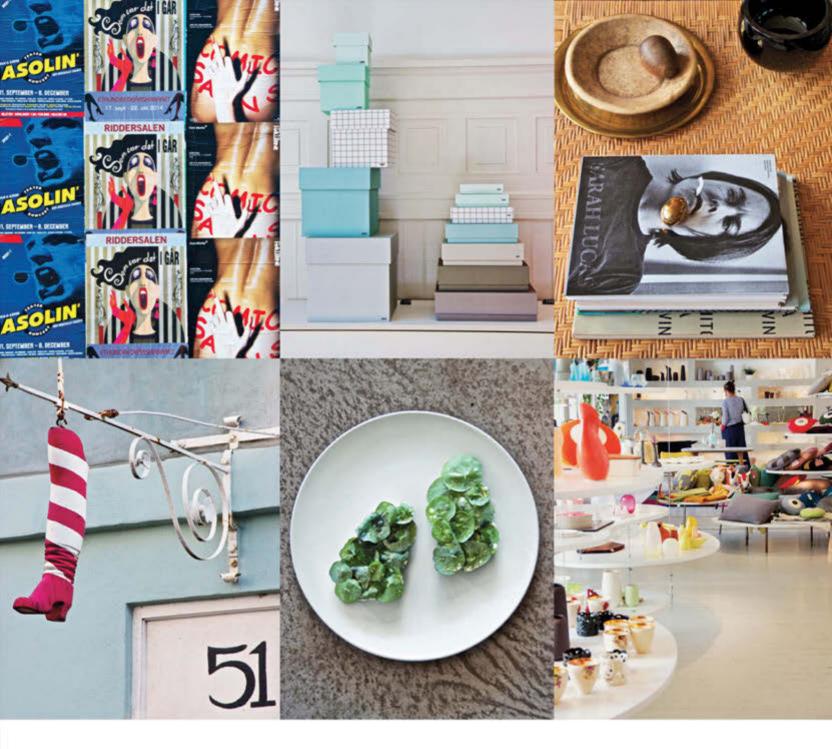
favours. The pièce de résistance was the *flodebøller*, a biscuit topped by a tower of marshmallow covered in dark chocolate. Seemingly insurmountable... and then again, not.

Coffee bars are on every corner and I got rather attached to the Joe & the Juice chain, but Tom felt that I was lowering the tone, so we ended up pre-dinner in Balthazar, the only Champagne bar in Copenhagen, which sells 36 varieties. Personally, I felt a sparkling wine was not the drink of Copenhagen. I really wanted a gin or a vodka, something clean and streamlined, but seeing as the last time I drank spirits I fell into a laundry basket, we decided to stick to the fizz.

Later we made for the docks. The Standard is housed in a long, low Art Deco building, a former custom house devised by architect Kristoffer Nyrop Varming in 1937. It sits on the canal's edge and looks like a bright turquoise ship – inside are three restaurants and a thriving jazz club, with shows at 6pm and 8.30pm every day except Sundays. The reservation that people beg, borrow and steal to get is at Studio, the creation of ex-Noma chef Torsten Vildgaard. It takes weeks to secure a table, so we rather begrudgingly booked in at Almanak on the ground floor instead, only to realise that Almanak is also considered one of the best restaurants in Copenhagen. It has a modern Nordic menu, but without froth or grandeur. Snacks included pork rind and vinegar salt, and bread with homemade goat's butter; mains featured cod with leeks and tomatoes, and pork and cabbage. Low lighting, an airy white room and utilitarian furniture give it a soft, relaxed atmosphere. I need an Almanak in London.

For breakfast, head to Atelier September. It is run by quite simply the best-looking man we had ever seen, chef Frederik





This page, clockwise from top: poster hoarding in the city centre; boxes at HAY; The Apartment; Designer Zoo; cod with garlic and nasturtium at Geist; barber's sign opposite Hotel SP34. Opposite, clockwise from left: The Apartment; a display at HAY; Kongens Nytory square at the end of Stroget

Bille Brahe. We sat in a small room with huge arching windows looking over Gotthersgarde, with a display of rye bread that was appetising beyond belief. The avocado on rye toast, on old Royal Copenhagen china, with a mason jar of fresh grapefruit juice over ice, was the zenith of morning feasting for me.

We'd been tipped off to Atelier September by a woman whom everyone interested in interiors needs to have on speed-Google, Tina Seidenfaden Busck. After working for Sotheby's for more than 10 years, she now operates The Apartment, an elegant 18th-century flat-as-shop in Christianshavn. She believes that if you are going to live with furniture, you need to see it in a home setting. Three times a year she redecorates the space to exhibit the pieces she wants to sell.

It is a breathtaking experience. Every item is shown off at its finest. There isn't a thing you don't want to buy – I was trying to scrape the wallpaper off the walls. In a

land in which grey, dove grey and slate grey are the currency, she embraces colour and shine, brass and wood. She is effortlessly cool in her choices and has a sympathetic understanding of how furniture works together to create a home. Obviously, there are three-piece suites from DFS that do that as well, but I'd err on the side of Seidenfaden Busck if you can afford to.

COPENHAGEN IS A SMALL CITY; we pretty much crisscrossed it in the time we were there, walking, of course. Kayaking is also possible, but Tom was having none of it. I decided, as we wandered, that I had never seen so many tall, handsome men wearing shorts above the knee. It was overwhelming, more so for the fact that they didn't look obscene. The place is just full of beautiful, happy people. This would, naturally, be sickening, except for the fact that they have a seriousness in their approach to life that gives them depth, and a bone-dry sense of humour.



Take Kim Dolva of Københavns Møbelsnedkeri, who Seidenfaden Busck uses for her cabinetry. When we visited him in his warehouse, we realised we had seen his handmade table in the window of Illums. The humble workspace belied his newfound success; despite being yet another dish, he is basically a nerd for woodcraft. He turns single slabs of tree into finely hewn dining tables, carves whole kitchens from pippy oak, and has invented ingenious wooden crates, like Apple packaging for medieval times, for shipping his bathroom mirrors.

We ended up back in the centre of town where, resting our eyes from chair legs and men's legs, we sought out Tage Andersen. Everyone we spoke to about design said we had to see the work of this florist – not so much a flower arranger as an architect. His shop is black, with beautiful songbirds singing in enormous domed cages. You don't grab a bunch of peonies and go. You have them created for you, according to Tage's vision. Blinking

in the gloaming, we came face to face with a man who looked exactly like Geppetto in *Pinocchio* – antiquated spectacles, breeches, hobnailed boots. He wouldn't talk to us, which made me love him even more. A true artist, too busy composing. No time for trivialities/idiots.

Dinner was in Geist, the Space CPH-designed restaurant of Bo Bech, the Danes' answer to Gordon Ramsay. Sit by the bar and watch the chefs cook. Local ingredients are key here, and you choose five small mains. Again it was simple: carrots steamed with orange, or salted mackerel with mustard and horseradish toast. Puddings were slightly more fanciful, including Air in Air in Air Tiramisu. It's a true foodie experience, but it is not cheap. We rounded off our night propping up the marble bar at Holmens Kanal. Tom raved about the fixtures and fittings; all I knew was that it was just the right place to drink vodka. And I did. Only the laundry basket back at Hotel d'Angleterre knows what happened next.



DESIGNS ON COPENHAGEN

BY LONDON-BASED ARCHITECT TOM BARTLETT

WHERE TO SHOP

The Apartment

These incredible rooms have been converted into the best showcase for contemporary European furniture by the elegant Tina Seidenfaden Busck. You need an appointment to come and browse. And only very lucky people such as Phoebe Philo are allowed to stay here. A very impressive curation. www.theapartment.dk

HAY

A shop with global ambitions – the collection ranges from furniture to pencil pads and has a clear and playful aesthetic. The bags by British designer Sebastian Wrong are a useful first stop – you can easily fill them to the brim. www.hay.dk

Dansk Møbelkunst Gallery

You'll need to call in advance to secure your entry, but it's worth the trouble for museum-quality Danish furniture. By the end of your visit you'll know your Bruno Mathsson from your Børge Mogenson. www.dmk.dk

Københavns Møbelsnedkeri

An exceptional joinery workshop that makes contemporary furniture. It also flies craftsmen all over the world to make custom-built dressing rooms and kitchens, and produces highly covetable bespoke ironmongery. www.kbhsnedkeri.dk

House of Design

More Danish classics – no reproductions here, only restored and recovered pieces that are well worth the journey to Copenhagen.

www.houseofdesign.dk



Normann Copenhagen

OK, it's not as cheap as Ikea, but the designs here are very good value. Clothing, too. Keep an eye out for the new sofas and the excellent botanical-print chairs.

www.normann-copenhagen.com

Illums Bolighus

With plenty of brands you definitely won't have heard of, this homeware shop is excellent for accessories and worth a long amble around. The children's furniture section is superb.

www.illumsbolighus.com

Stilleben

For porcelain teacups dip-dyed in indigo and other lovely contemporary Danish design, from coasters to candles, that you can pack up and take home without involving a shipping company. www.stillebenshop.com

WHERE TO DRINK

Holmens Kanal

This is the bar of dreams – not overly designed but definitely sophisticated and grown-up, full of very dark corners and barmen who are gin experts. The drinks are not too serious, and always served with a glass of water.

Ruby

Busy, buzzy, boozy and slightly kitsch, this is full to the brim with cocktail knowledge and a glowing, warming front-room feel. www.rby.dk

Union

A speakeasy vibe emanates from the unmarked door entrance here. Supposedly there is a more exclusive space that you could get into, but who cares? This place is fantastic and everyone in it seems effortlessly cool. www.theunionbar.dk

Mikkeller

A low-key contemporary spot with 20 beers on tap and hordes of hipsters at the bar. Pack your skinnies and a trilby. www.mikkeller.dk

Salon 39

With a winning formula of barmen in bow ties and flat caps, this experimental bar serves bizarrely conceived cocktails – the bacon-infused Bloody Mary is a no-brainer. www.salon39.dk

WHERE TO EAT

Noma

Totally, wonderfully extraordinary and, if you really plan miles ahead, it's just about possible



Geist

An energetic place to sample the new Nordic cuisine. Order a collection of small plates that will leave you thinking, and smiling, after every mouthful. www.restaurantgeist.dk. About £140 for two

Kødbyens Fish Bar

Dropping the finery of haute Nordic, this venue serves simple but sublime fish dishes, some with a little bit of moss on the side. www. fiskebaren.dk. About £120 for two

WHERE TO STAY

Hotel d'Angleterre

Established in 1755 and newly refurbished, the d'Angleterre is in the perfect location for bars, restaurants and Ostergade, the main shopping drag. Its excellent Michelinstarred restaurant, Marchal, is under the charge of Ronny Emborg. www.dangleterre.dk.

Doubles from about £270

Hotel SP34

On the west side of the old town (younger, clubbier), this boutique hotel celebrates new Danish design. Battleship-grey rooms with brass detailing and hugely comfortable beds are set above the buzzing lobby. The burgers and cocktails at Cock's and Cows are excellent. www.brochner-hotels.dk. Doubles from about £95

Radisson Blu Royal Hotel

Only Room 606 of Arne Jacobsen's designer hotel for SAS retains its original decor, but it's a fine testament to the master who designed JFK's iconic TWA terminal and the Egg chair, and definitely the one to book. www.radissonblu.com/royalhotel-copenhagen. Doubles from about £230



AROUND THE WORLD WITH **BILL NIGHY**

The go-to chap for playing urbane Englishmen with a hint of neurosis, who starred in films such as Love Actually and Harry Potter, is happier in a corner café than an exotic location

Where have you just come back from?

Yorkshire, which was extremely beautiful. I was filming for Dad's Army in Beverley, Bridlington, Scarborough, Whitby - that coast and those beaches are sensational. I'm crazy about Yorkshire – it ought to be independent.

Where have you felt happiest?

I've had two ecstatic times in New York. The first time I went, it was Christmas and I arrived at night and it really was like being in the movies. I was put up in the Waldorf, in the only smoking room left in America, in the days when I would smoke cigars. There aren't many times when you feel uncomplicatedly happy, like nothing's-wrong-happy, but I did. And the other time was after I'd opened a play on Broadway, which is an alarming process. The night after we'd opened, it dawned on me that we'd done it. I was in the car with my driver, Andrew, and Barry White came on the radio. Previously I'd had no relationship with Barry White but I said to Andrew, 'Turn that motherfucker up, and let's go to Brooklyn for dessert.' We drove through New York with our arms aloft to Barry White. I remember thinking, 'Just let this last.' It was relief. I had come out of a form of shock to a blissful awareness that I didn't have to be scared any more.

Which is your favourite city, and why?

London is a great city – I love it more and more. There are so many districts and so much variety. I love it mostly at night; I particularly love it by the river. I don't mind the rain, that just helps. Weather is probably one of my greatest enthusiasms.

Describe your favourite view

If you sit on the first-floor balcony of The Lalit hotel in Udaipur and look out over the lake to the mountains, with your book and your music, then that is a very good situation to be in. I did a lot of that when we were filming The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel. I spent long uncomplicated days in which the only struggle was what to have for breakfast, which book to read, which playlist to put on. It was just dreamy. Where did you go on your first holiday

on your own?

Cornwall, near St Ives, with nine other boys. I come from a small town and we all used to use one pub. At some point, the weather would change on a Saturday night and someone would say, 'Cornwall.' We used to have a Dormobile, which we joint-owned. and we would take it down there overnight. We would stay in this farmer's barn, with sleeping bags, if we'd remembered, and do odd jobs. He had a beautiful Gaggia coffee machine, which was the first I'd seen, and we used to sit underneath it in worship. Outside the barn there was a cold tap, and splashing your face in icy, cold water from the tap, with the sunlight just beginning to hit the cold stones – those were ecstatic moments. You'd just think, the future holds nothing but promise and all my anxieties from the night before, the paranoia induced by scrumpy and other things, have gone out the window.

IRVING PENN WAS SERIOUS BUT VERY FUNNY. HE MADE ME WANT TO PUT MY HEAD IN HIS LAP'

Tell us about a great little place vou know

Berkeley Square in London. I'm crazy about plane trees, and not only in London; in Melbourne too, which is a city I enjoyed very much. I like those secret patches of green you find in cities. I love Paris for that reason. Battersea Park is a wonderful spot, in the evening particularly, and Albert Bridge is very beautiful. I love being under a bridge with a cup of coffee. Which is the smartest hotel you've ever stayed in?

I get institutionalised in places very quickly – I want to stay in the same hotel, preferably in the same room, and sit in the same chair I sat in before, reading the New York Times. I stay in The Carlyle in New York, L'Ermitage in Los Angeles and, in Paris, at Le Bristol. All three are very, very satisfying. In Paris I sometimes stay in a little hotel called Le Citizen, depending on who's paying. I once stayed a couple of nights in the Coco Chanel

suite at the Ritz Paris. My daughter came, she was about 14, and she screamed as she walked in. There were lots of things you didn't know you liked until you got there: shuttered windows, huge soft sofas, electric chandeliers, and a large bath with gold eagles on the taps. The bed was like Wembley Stadium, and I also took a great fancy to the smoked mirrors, because everyone looks good in them.

Sightseeing or sun lounger?

When I go to hot places, where it's the same every time you open the curtains, I get kind of uneasy. As an Anglo-sort-of-Irish person, the heat doesn't suit me. I really don't understand people who travel long distances to the sun. I don't see which part of it is pleasurable. It hurts when it hits your skin, you then have to apply unguents, which make you uncomfortable, and you might go the colour of embarrassment. They're usually quite unremarkable places except that they've got sunshine. I don't get it.

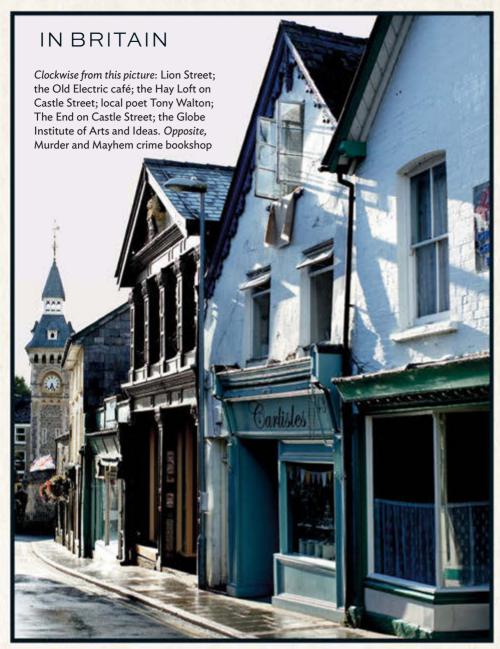
Who is the most interesting person you've met on your travels?

Irving Penn. He took my photograph in New York for Vogue. Any PR impulse you had going – which is a polite way of saying bullshit – dissipated as soon as you met him. You knew that none of that was going to hang. If he asked you something simple like, 'How are you?', you weren't going to try to sell him the usual stuff, you were going to attempt the truth. He was just funny, deadly serious, but very funny, and he made you want to cry or put your head in his lap.

How do you relax?

I listen to music. I occasionally rock it up, but mostly it's the blues. And I read, and I might saunter somewhere, usually to get coffee. That's everything I like. That and bookshops. When we're filming and the cast come round to say, 'We're off to go water-skiing/ look at the Grand Canyon/Taj Mahal,' I say, 'I'll catch you later, I'll be in the café on the corner.' Cafés are my favourite thing in the world. I navigate by them. As a phenomenon, they are beautiful and essential.

Bill Nighy was talking to Francesca Babb. He stars in 'The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel', out on DVD soon











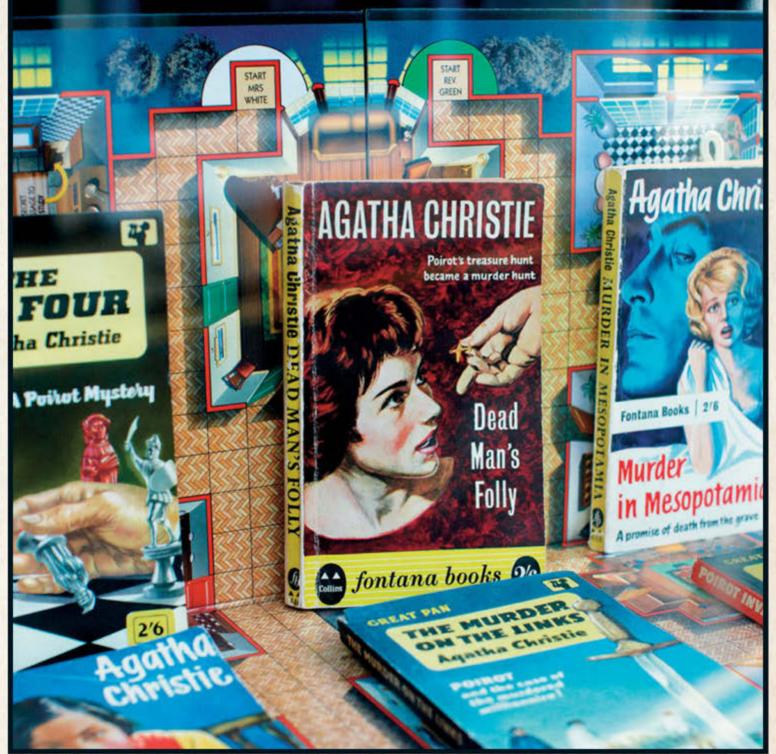


146 Condé Nast Traveller May 2015

OUR SERIES OF INSIDER UK GUIDES CONTINUES WITH...

HAY-ON-WYE

The Welsh border town famed for its literary festival, which has spawned sister events from Beirut to Cartagena, was declared a kingdom in the 1970s by a self-proclaimed ruler. As the scene is set for this year's book bonanza, **Sally Shalam** gets caught up in the free-thinking spirit. Photographs by **Craig Fordham**



IN BRITAIN

hen I drive from Abergavenny through the Brecon Beacons to Hay-on-Wye, it feels as though I am heading to a hidden enclave. Maybe it is because Hay is a fortified border town that has seen plenty of action between the English and the Welsh. Perhaps it is the absence of a fast rail link to London, or high-street chains. Oh, and mobile reception is lousy. Then again, there is its setting between the blue, summer-hazy Radnorshire Hills and the Black Mountains. Entering the town through skinny streets that bend around whitewashed cottages and pretty shopfronts, I can sense a whiff of independence, of cut-offness, a faintly anarchic air. This is why I love Hay.

This market town on the River Wye is dominated by a crumbling Norman castle with Jacobean and Victorian additions. The first bookshop was opened in the 1960s by Richard Booth, a local man who began importing boxloads of second-hand tomes from the USA. More booksellers followed until the little town had some 30 such shops. Internationally recognised as a Town of Books, it has been home to the annual Hay Festival of Literature since 1988 (this year it runs from 21 to 31 May). The scant population of 1,500 swells as up to half a million visitors throng the lanes for talks by world-class writers: Bill Clinton called it 'the Woodstock of the mind'.

There are other joys: antiques emporia and market day, when townspeople and outlying villagers throng stalls heaped with rosy-cheeked radishes and darkly glistening cherries. Once they would have mounted the cobbles to the ancient gateway into the castle square. Now they nudge mud-spattered four-wheel-drives into parking spaces. Beside the 19th-century Butter Market, the elegant stone-arched Cheese Market has been saved from dereliction and pressed back into service as a covered hall for producers.

Outdoor enthusiasts can hike up Hay Bluff, along Offa's Dyke, or explore by canoe, but when it rains (and it can chuck down), hours will slide by in Hay's bookshops.

The castle is now owned by a charitable trust and plans are afoot to restore it as an arts centre. Perhaps its dilapidated charms will escape too much tarting up. After all, Hay is characterised by shabby elegance, something the Groucho Club captures with its Litfest pop-up restaurant. Whoever graces this year's line-up, you can be sure that dinner at the Groucho will be one of the hottest tickets in town.



WHERE TO STAY

GET SMART

Despite its central location, old coaching inn **The Bear** is a restful,

stylish sanctuary. Beams, wonky corners and warm tones of Welsh oak blend with contemporary furnishings, eclectic art and sleek bathrooms. There's a courtyard in which to breakfast on warm days – a meal to linger over as landlord David Gibbon creates delicious alternatives to his great fry-up, such as Hereford-cheese-and-leek tart. The private car park is a real boon. +44 1497 821302; www. thebearhay.com. Doubles from £75

SLICE OF THE ACTION

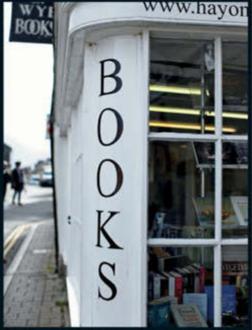
During the Litfest, beds are as sought after as a flyleaf signed by festival president Stephen Fry. Cheese Market Flat occupies a splendid vantage point in the historic market opposite the castle. Natural light floods through ample sash

windows into a large sitting-dining room with a kitchen in which to cook your market purchases. +44 1497 821403; www. haycheesemarket.org. Sleeps two. From £295 for four nights

OUT-OF-TOWN RETREATS

Another cool arrival is Westbrook Court **B&B**, four miles from Hay. A fivebedroom timbered terrace has been created on the footprint of an old stable block behind a 17th-century farmhouse. In the morning a basket filled with freshly baked pastries, fruit and coffee is delivered to your door; at the weekend a cooked breakfast is served in the house. The Peren, a converted barn in an acre of meadow in Lower Wyeside, is an antidote to festival fever for self-caterers. It offers privacy amid a profusion of wildflowers, with underfloor heating and log-burning stoves. Zero light pollution and the sound of silence (or an owl) at night will either









soothe or spook city dwellers. **The Huts** in the Hills are off-grid converted shepherd shacks in the lee of Hay Bluff. The five huts (four with double beds, the fifth with a kitchen and shower) are arranged around a firepit beside tumbling Digedi Brook. Westbrook (+44 1497 831752; www.westbrookcourtbandb.co.uk). Doubles from £85. The Peren (+44 1497 831225; www.furtherafield.com). Sleeps five. From £295 for three nights. The Huts in the Hills (+44 7812 342088; www.the hutsinthehills.co.uk). From £43 a night

COUNTRY CRASHPAD

Less hardy souls might prefer the posh **Bunkhouse** in Glasbury-on-Wye, a self-catering take on a capsule hotel with modern bunks and contemporary open-plan living space in a converted chapel. Perfect for nursing a sore postparty head. +44 1497 847213; www.wye valleycanoes.co.uk. Sleeps 14. £1,070 for two nights

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

A CUPPA WITH A TWIST

The Old Electric Shop is a boho haunt packed with

industrial furniture and vintage Yohji Yamamoto, as well as Welsh wool label Llynfi. Once you've bagged a bias-cut frock, sink into a leather barber's chair with a cappuccino at the coffee counter, which, on designated evenings and at festival time, also serves fabulous gin cocktails. The River Café in Glasbury is the most bucolic tea spot. From weathered wooden chairs on a terrace, survey the swan-bedecked River Wye's progress. www.oldelectric.co.uk; www.wyevalley canoes.co.uk

SWEET SOMETHINGS

Shepherds Ice Cream Parlour is unselfconsciously retro. Sit in for coffee or take away a sheep's-milk ice cream; 16 flavours include mango with chilli, damson, and banana-toffeecrunch. Thursday is market day, and if you only visit one stall, make it **Lucretia's Cakes** in the Butter Market. Octogenarian Lucretia Wood-Cole makes the most delicate Welsh cakes, tiny jam tarts and indulgent chocolate sponges, and dresses up in purple brocade to sell them. www.shepherdsicecream.co.uk

DIVINE DINING

Everyone is talking about **St John's Place**. Former Vinoteca chef de partie
Julia Robson has shoehorned her tiny
restaurant (seats 25) into a church hall.
Short, memorable menus might include
beef carpaccio, runner beans, anchovy
and Berkswell cheese; sea trout, sugar
snaps, celeriac, sorrel and horseradish;
cherry, lavender and grappa trifle with
pistachios. Open Thursday to Saturday
nights. Schedule your trip around it
(I'm serious) and book in advance. +44
78 5578 3799; stjohnsplacehay.tumblr.com.
About £55 for two

FOODIE FIND

Six miles away in the Black Mountains, **The Bull's Head** at Craswall is as far from gastropub predictability as you can get, from the unmodernised interior to the local produce translated into treats such as Leintwardine black pudding with caramelised apple and cider sauce, and ragu of venison. +44 1981 510616; www. bullsheadcraswall.co.uk. About £55 for two

HIGH-BROW BRUNCH

Flagstone floors and art exhibitions provide a backdrop to Sunday brunch in **Booth's Bookshop Café** (cockles and laverbread on sourdough toast; Welsh rarebit and chilli jam). Make a return



visit for afternoon tea of Sevilleorange-marmalade cake, impossibly rich chocolate brownies and a proper looseleaf brew. +44 1497 820322; www.booth books.co.uk. Brunch about £15 for two

TOP TAPAS

A former pub, run by the ebullient Thalia Rouse and Tricia Jones, **Tomatitos** serves fashionably small plates of earthy home-cooking, including tomato-and-pickled-garlic salad, and goujons of haddock in light-as-air batter with salsa verde. +44 1497 820772; www.hay tomatitos.co.uk. About £30 for two

A CRUST ABOVE

On market day, **Alex Gooch's bread stall** beside the Victorian clocktower sells out fast. His baked goods are also on sale, along with Neal's Yard Creamery Ragstone and Dorstone cheeses, at **Hay**

Deli on Lion Street. The delicious sourdough served in cafés around town is made by **Kate Bretherton-Radcliffe**, and is also available at the Butter Market. At the restored **Talgarth Mill** in nearby Talgarth, wholemeal, spelt and gluten-free bread is baked in a wood-fired oven. Try it smothered in gorgeous Caerphilly cheese in the adjoining **Bakers' Table** café.

WHERE TO SHOP

CURIOUS COLLECTIBLES Begin at **The End** on

Castle Street, whose

owner, Marina Rendle, must have been a Victorian naturalist in a former life. Bolts of French linens vie with taxidermy, replica birds' eggs and Perspex-encased insects. Former London fashion editor Becky Bain has an eye for vintage tweeds, desirable handbags and baubles. Her shop, **The Shed**, is a narrow cavern of hunt-for-me classics in High Town. The coolest Fair Trade outlet ever is Eighteen Rabbit, beneath the castle on what locals call The Cobbles. It's packed with vibrant bamboo bowls, Mexican beatentin mirrors and Dutch designer Piet Hein Eek's elegant vases and jugs, produced in partnership with Vietnamese potters. Simon Farrell's chandelier shop, Goosey Ganders in High Town, puts sparkle into the most overcast Hay day. Antique English Osler crystal, Venetian and Bohemian glass, Swarovski: he has restrung every one. Lion Street Gallery always has covetable contemporary art and usually an oil or two by sought-after Welsh artist Wynne Jenkins. Pick up a Hay Gallery Trail map here and work your way around the rest.

REKINDLE A LOVE OF BOOKSHOPS

Start by downloading a guide from www. hay-on-wye.co.uk or pick up a leaflet from the tourist information office on Oxford Road or in shops around town. **Booth's** on Lion Street is probably the most beautiful; **Hay Cinema Bookshop** one of the most cavernous, with 200,000 books. **Addyman Annexe** on Castle Street (housing overflow from English-literature and first-edition specialist Addyman) has a sign outside declaring Kindles banned from Hay. Which, frankly, says it all.

WHAT TO SEE & DO

DRAMA AND DREADLOCKS

Catch a live-streamed National Theatre play or

film in the comfort of an Italian-leather seat at **Booth's Bookshop Cinema** on Brook Street. Plug into live music, from Delta blues to reggae, and a regular philosophy café, at the **Globe Institute of Art and Ideas** in a former Methodist chapel on Newport Street.

OFF-ROAD ADVENTURES

Hire a Twizy eco-electric car from Westview Guesthouse to enjoy spectacular views from the upland moor of the Begwyns or Capel-y-ffin. They resemble Sixties bubble cars, seat two, reach 50mph and are rechargeable around Hay. You'll have so much fun you might buy one to take home. From Hay Bridge stroll upstream at dusk to the Warren, a little beach where locals go wild swimming and picnic. Along the verdant bank, thick with Himalayan balsam, you'll reach the Swan Hotel just as you're thinking, 'Glass of prosecco on the lawn.'

TRAVELLER ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

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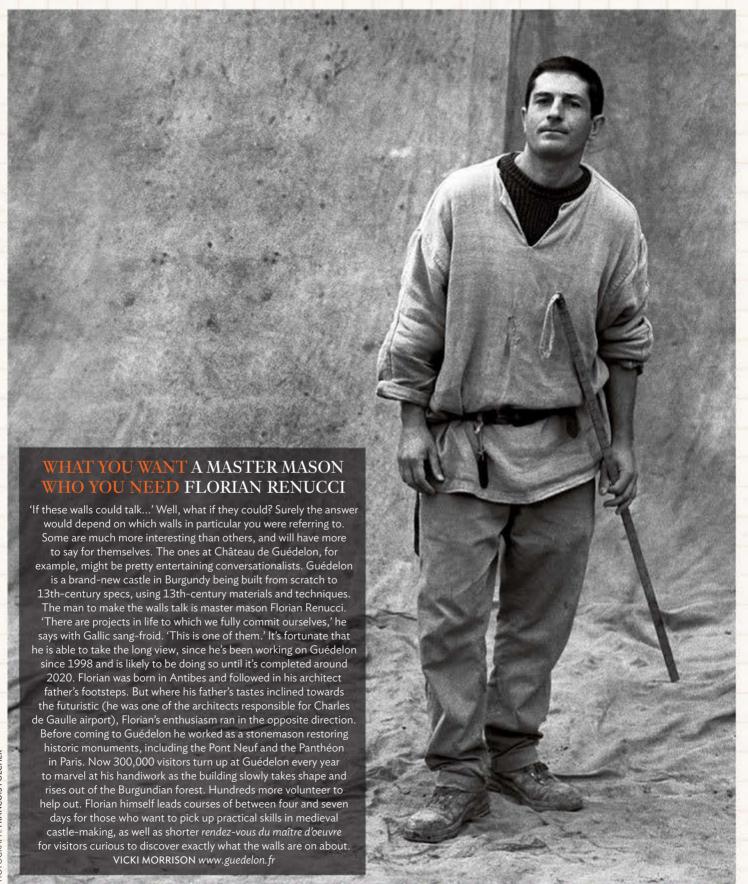
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THE EXPERTS

This month's Health Books Gadgets Food Advice

EDITED BY STEVE KING & EMMA LOVE





SCIENCE OF THE LAMBS

Over the centuries, the search for immortality has led to some truly esoteric experiments. Nearly 100 years ago, Clinique La Prairie pioneered rejuvenating injections of sheep foetuses. It was an instant hit, and since then everyone from Winston Churchill to Mick Jagger has flocked here. Almost 20 years after her first visit, Lucia van der Post checks in to see it's still ahead of the herd

T'S THE HUSH YOU NOTICE FIRST. That quiet hum that signals Swiss efficiency, cleanliness and discretion. The Clinique La Prairie, just outside Montreux, a few hundred yards from the edge of Lake Geneva, is one of the world's few health centres that merits the word legendary. The pioneering research into rejuvenation undertaken by its founder, Dr Paul Niehans, in the 1920s, has lent CLP – as its legion of fans call it – fabled status and an air of intrigue.

The exact formula has remained secret, but it is claimed to reduce cell division, boost the immune system and slow the ageing process. In 1953, Pope Pius XII, near death, credited his revival to the clinic's Revitalisation cell therapy, an accolade that made headlines around the world. In the decades since Dr Niehans first made his 'elixir of youth' available to

that even Margaret Thatcher is alleged to have tried. I emerged utterly re-energised and a few kilos lighter. I also felt I had discovered one of the most progressive spas in the world, dedicated not just to preventing the signs of ageing but to the reversal of the process. Back then the surroundings were a little spartan. While it wasn't exactly a hospital, neither was it anywhere close to being a luxurious spa hotel. The bedrooms were fairly basic, the bathrooms teeny. But I felt I had been given a glimpse into the future of spa-centric medical health care.

Nowadays, CLP is much more pampering. There is an infinitely more impressive white-on-white spa and gym (largely empty, but with hugely enthusiastic staff), an immense pool overlooking the lake, a much wider range off, the reception areas are lined with glass shelves packed with the spa's own Swiss Perfection products, made with extracts of iris, a plant known for its year-round hardiness and a stimulant of cell metabolism. The treatment rooms contain the sort of equipment that lesser spas can only dream about, so there are collagen-stimulating facials, oxygen-blast facials with tiny needles to improve penetration, cellulite-busting massage treatments, Thai massage (the tiny Thai therapist even stands on your bottom), reflexology, acupuncture, thalassotherapy, and hydrotherapy.

There's a Kneipp course by the pool, where guests pick their way along smooth stones, elegant manicure and pedicure stations, and sauna and steam rooms. Between treatments head to the spa café, which opens onto a terrace that

POPE PIUS XII, NEAR DEATH, CREDITED HIS REVIVAL TO THE CLINIC'S REVITALIZATION CELL THERAPY

anyone with the wherewithal to afford it, CLP has evolved into an ahead-of-the-pack medi-spa visited by some of the world's grandest names. It is immaculate, forbiddingly expensive and unequivocally focused on results-driven treatments. This is where you come if you are recovering from chemotherapy, or from a chronic viral infection. Or if you are serious about turning around your health. And it is, of course, the prime place to pick if you want to turn back the clock.

I first visited La Prairie some 18 years ago. I remember it for its admirably professional medical staff, a white-coated team who checked out almost every bodily function amenable to machine, stethoscope or X-ray. I came away feeling reassured (such a relief to learn you're not harbouring any lurking lumps), much excited about my teeth-whitening programme (then thrillingly new) and pumped up with the famous CLP extract

of spa therapies, and delectable healthy food. The 60 bedrooms are prettier and more beguiling. High-ceilinged, charmingly furnished in creamy whites and gold, with a small dressing-room area, sitting room and a bed that inclines at the flick of a remote so you can admire lake and mountain views without any propping-up of pillows, they provide a soothing place to wile away the few nuggets of spare daytime the schedule allows. If you wish, you can dine in your room; evenings tend to be very quiet (bring every book you want to catch up on). Breakfast is a room-service affair, so you can start the day gently, enjoying the sight of mist rising off the lake.

The spa deals with everything non-invasive and beautifying. Soothing Icoone body treatments, for instance – brilliant for improving the circulation and firming up the skin. Although the La Prairie skincare range has long since been sold

looks across the lake to the Alps, for a smoothie or salad. But don't be deceived into thinking this is an indulgent place. Across the garden from the spa, the state-of-the-art clinic makes it quite clear that CLP doesn't adhere to the rose-petals-in-the-bath school of well-being.

Clinique La Prairie covers way beyond the basics. A week of spa treats will be conducted by smiley but serious, brilliantly well-trained members of the 30-strong therapist team. And yes, there are tip-top weight-loss and anti-ageing courses. But they will also deal with insomnia, osteoporosis, drug and alcohol problems, dental problems, mentalhealth issues (there are psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists to consult, all speaking flawless English). There's even a menopause centre. No other spa offers such an incredible range of expertise, although Switzerland's other star spa, Bad Ragaz and, in Germany,

➤ the new medi-spa in Baden Baden, Villa Stephanie, are snapping jealously at CLP's heels. Scarcely any medical disorder is uncared-for. Around 50 eminent specialists cover everything from cardiology and dentistry to cosmetic surgery (anything from eyelid-lifting to a full-blown face-lift) and musculoskeletal disorders. 'Mobility is a big issue with some of our older clients, the spa's PR manager, Eirini Tigkaraki, explains. The ENT specialists will screen for early upper aero-digestive tract disorders and sinus problems. There are orthopaedic experts, rheumatologists and neurologists, as well as MRI scanners and other cutting-edge equipment to make any medic drool.

For those seeking the most comprehensive health MOT out there, CLP is a dream. Hypochondriac heaven it may be for some, but it's the clinic's

used to be delivered by an injection the length of the King's Road into the buttocks, but these days CLP has patented a version that, rather cleverly, is taken orally.

The idea behind cell therapy is that foetuses harbour specific substances needed to grow muscles, tissue and nerves, and that if these can be harvested and delivered into an adult human body, dormant cells can be reactivated and persuaded to act like younger ones. It has taken many years to substantiate these claims, but today the clinic has laboratory-based research showing that the extract does indeed work, that it strengthens the immune system, re-energises the body, and boosts resistance to disease.

The treatment is not advised for the under 40s: 'There is no point, that young,' says the clinic's medical director,
Adrian Heini, but it is no wonder that

as those that adhere to the FX Mayr method) endorse fasting and tough regimes of Epsom salts and colonics, Dr Heini believes that with this approach, 'You only lose muscle and then, when you go back to your normal regime, weight reappears as fat.' Instead, CLP's approach is one that can easily be kept up at home.

Thinking about weight loss has changed since I was last at the clinic. 'Twenty years ago,' says Laurence Grosjean, the head dietician, 'we talked calories. No more. Now we know much more about how the brain works we have a different approach and we avoid all negative thinking about food. It takes at least 20 minutes for the stomach to send a message to the brain that you've had enough to eat, so if you eat too fast, you can easily eat too much. Eat slowly, enjoy it more and your brain will tell you when you've had enough.'

She doesn't believe in 'sad' food – 'we like lots of tastes and pretty plates, full of seasonal colour'. Nothing is forbidden (dinner includes pudding, and I'm even allowed proper tea and coffee), and every meal contains protein and carbohydrates, with lots of vegetables ('You need all of them for the body to function properly'). 'Wellness comes through pleasure!' I hear. And 'We just don't do fatty meat and we make our sauces with herbs and a minimum of fat.'

What a refreshing approach. It's one that I feel you can trust entirely. Which pretty much sums up my feelings about

EXPERIMENTS SHOW THAT MICE RECEIVING THE THERAPY LIVE 40 PER CENT LONGER

assembly of experts that is without doubt the single most important factor in bringing devoted guests back, again and again. By the end of my week's stay I had undergone an array of tests that, at home in London, would have taken weeks of traipsing around Harley Street. Blood tests to check blood-sugar levels, cholesterol, thyroid, and vitamin deficiencies; X-rays, electrocardiograms and ultrasounds to check heart, bones, chest, abdomen, the vascular system and lungs. Nothing is left to chance. It's hard to put into words quite how comforting this is; to know that in just a couple of days every organ has been scrutinised by expert eyes.

This helps to account for the staggering price. A week-long package at La Prairie starts at around £10,000 – and that's before you've even got close to the notorious Revitalization programme, which for many is the essence of a stay here. That will more than double the starting price. Yes, that's right, you're looking at more than £20,000 for the CLP extract.

So, what's it all about? The Revitalization programme is delivered over the course of six days. The extract at its heart is derived from the livers of foetuses of a special breed of black sheep reared on the clinic's farm an hour's drive from Montreux, then processed at a lab whose location, says Dr Heini, is secret. It

60 per cent of older guests who try Revitalization return every two years as the clinic advises, since that is how long the effects of the treatment last. It is probably as close to an immortal elixir as we will get for our generation.

For obvious reasons, experiments on human patients receiving the extract cannot be done: there are too many imponderables to take into account. But clinical experiments show that mice receiving CLP treatment live 40 per

SOME CHINESE VISITORS EVEN WANT TO GIVE THE TREATMENT TO THEIR CHILDREN

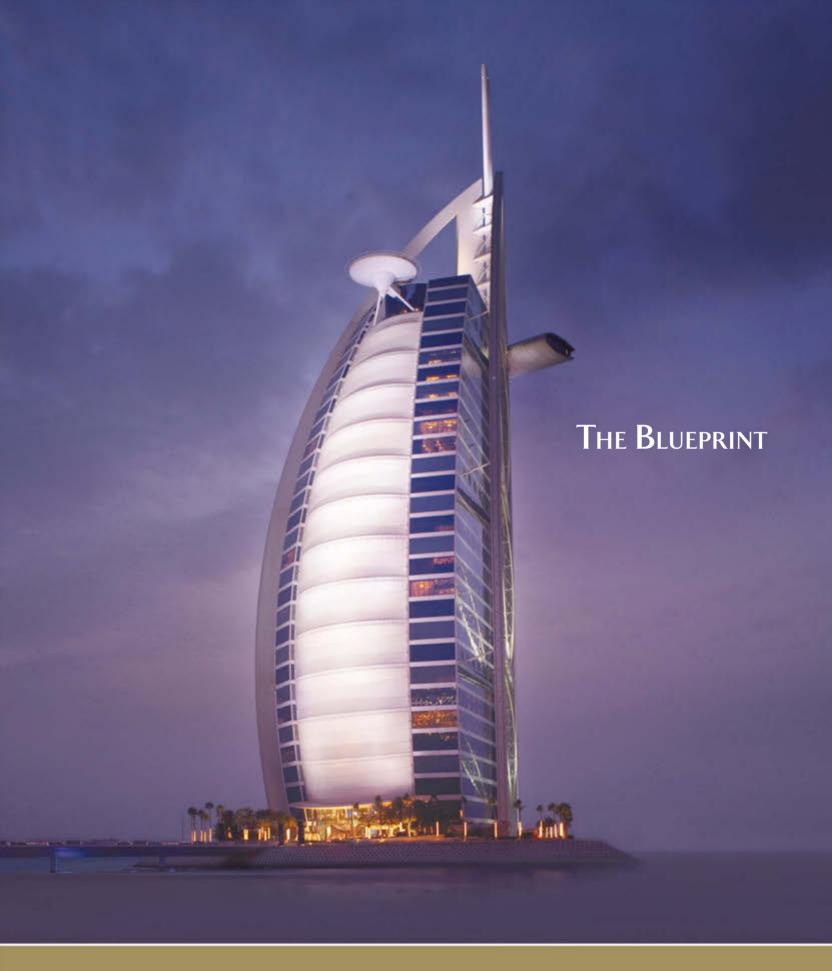
cent longer than those that don't. Exciting. Chinese visitors, in particular, coming from a culture that reveres longevity, are so enthralled by this statistic that some arrive with children in their 20s, wanting them to be given the treatment so they have an extra competitive edge in life.

Despite the extraordinary draw and reputedly successful results of the Revitalization programme, Dr Heini is keen to point out that 'we are not in the business of miracle cures'. And it's true that CLP is about intelligent, thoroughly researched solutions. Perhaps nowhere is this clearer than in the ever-popular weight-loss department. While other clinics across Europe (such

CLP as a whole. Fundamentally, it is a spa as mega-medi-clinic, where airy-fairy, hocus-pocus stuff doesn't cut it.

The average life expectancy in the West is now 82 years for a woman and 79 for a man (at the beginning of the last century it was a mere 52 and 48 respectively). It is hardly a surprise then that most of us want those extra years to be healthy, energetic and productive. And Clinique La Prairie is one of the best places to help make this happen.

BOOK IT A six-night Weight Management Approach programme costs £13,330; the six-night Revitalization programme is £20,560. www.laprairie.ch



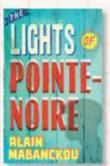
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SHELF IMPROVEMENT By Giles Foden



A real rarity this month, in the shape of a travel book by Congo's greatest writer, Alain Mabanckou. Much celebrated in France, he is from the Republic of Congo (the ROC, or Congo-Brazzaville, as it's sometimes called) rather than the bigger Democratic Republic of Congo, or DRC, formerly Zaire. The capitals of the two countries, Brazzaville and Kinshasa, are on opposite banks of the Congo River and are as different as could be, the former a dilapidated, fairly uninspiring place, the latter a throbbing metropolis. **The Lights of Pointe-Noire** (Serpent's Tail, £8.99) is primarily concerned with the ROC's more exciting second city, Pointe-Noire, which is on the coast, to the south-west of Brazzaville. Somewhat confusingly,

Pointe-Noire is part of the setting for William Boyd's novel *Brazzaville Beach*, where the ecologist Hope Clearwater reflects on her life in the tranquillity of a beachside villa. In Mabanckou's hands, a different picture emerges, of 'the hurly burly of a coastal city with not much indulgence for people arriving with the soil of the fields on their feet'. The reference is to the author's mother, who arrives in Pointe-Noire from a rural village with baby Alain on her hip, abandoned by his father. She becomes a successful market trader. On the day in 1989 that Alain leaves for Paris as a young man of 22, she reminds him of the Pointe-Noire that she brought him to: "That was the golden age," she said, 'we wore mini-skirts and high heels and the men went round in bell-bottomed trousers and Salamander shoes. Pointe-Noire was famous for its atmosphere, and everyone had work. Even Zairians started to arrive, though up till then you'd only see them in Brazzaville, they'd come over from Kinshasa, crossing the River Congo." Now, she says, the country is falling to pieces. But the changes are as nothing to those that Mabanckou himself will find on his return, a quarter of a century later, by which time the country has suffered the effects of Communist dictatorship and civil war. He wanders about the city, visiting the train station where conductors used to pursue

He wanders about the city, visiting the train station where conductors used to pursue those without tickets along the roofs of trains, the cinema where he used to watch martial-arts films, which is now a Pentecostal church, and the streets where the books and comics that began his literary education were spread out for sale on pavements.

One particular feature of this engaging book is that he keeps meeting the real-life characters who populate his novels, of which the best known are *Memoirs of a Porcupine* (2006), which won the Prix Renaudot, one of France's premier literary honours, and *Black Bazaar* (2009), which chronicles the lives of the various members of the African diaspora who frequent Jip's, an Afro-Cuban bar near Les Halles in Paris. That, at least, still exists.

THE GREATEST BOOK ON EARTH

Timothy O'Grady on Ryszard Kapuściński's 'The Emperor' and 'Shah of Shahs'



'Ryszard Kapuściński was a Polish poet who became a foreign correspondent to appease an insatiable curiosity about the world. He witnessed 27 coups, was jailed 40 times, received four death sentences and never asked a question at a press conference. While colleagues

took notes from generals, he was outside talking to soldiers on short rations. I first read him in a Picador volume containing *The Emperor*, about Haile Selassie, and *Shah of Shahs*, on the last of that line in Iran. You know from the first page that you are in the presence of something important. You feel the experience, the

compassion, the sophisticated humour, and the poet's eye as he ponders not only the myopia of power and the way resistance grows but also the shape of the vessel in which he is delivering this. He raises the particular to the mythical. Edna O'Brien gave me this book when I was writing reportage because it not only sets standards but opens doors. Don't let his reputation as a distorter of facts

dissuade you. There are many recorders of facts. Sophocles and Shakespeare bent facts, but gave you truths you will never forget.' Timothy O'Grady's 'Children of Las Vegas' will be published by Unbound later this year



TOURIST INFORMATION FOR

ATLANTIS



Located somewhere in the Atlantic, this huge island nation is renowned for its happy-go-lucky, mañana attitude and groundbreaking feats of architecture and engineering, as well as some incredible water rides. It's a bit like Dubai, but with less hubris.

WHAT TO PACK

1 Buoyancy aid, surfboard or fold-away kayak 2 A suitable offering for the gods 3 The latest Mary Beard book 4 Nothing breakable

WHAT TO DO It's a popular place to practise free-diving, and also attracts those who consider volcano tours a little too unadventurous. Earth tremors are common, but nothing serious is expected to happen here for ages.

GENERAL ADVICE

Visitors may not be covered by standard travel insurance. It's best to take a philosophical approach while here and ponder life's really important questions, such as 'Should I have packed different swimwear?' and 'Why is the seawater rising so rapidly?' RICK JORDAN



Croatia's capital is attracting admirers. Around 1 million vistors chose Zagreb for a short break last year.

Just a two hour flight from London, there's accommodation to suit all budgets including luxury hotels, eclectic boutique hotels and edgy city apartments. It's all easy on foot or using the excellent public tram service. There's a buzz in Zagreb these days as the restaurant scene ups its game and the city's café-society embraces everything from the traditional to cutting-edge contemporary. Bistro food, fine dining, tapas bars Zagreb style, they are all here. An impressive cultural scene is on offer and an opera ticket costs a fraction of the price of London or Paris. On matters French, the amazing Rodin in Zagreb runs from May to September, the first-ever exhibition of the

master's work in this part of Europe.

From spring through to late autumn, there are long sunny days and Zagreb steps outdoors. Out in the open-air there's InMusic, a kind of Croatian Glastonbury with top artistes performing at Lake Jarun, the city's own beach. At seven locations, Zagreb Time Machine presents the best of the past with historical figures, performers and promenaders oozing nostalgia. In early June, laughter and hilarity add to the mix as Cest is d'best festival of hilarious street theatre and circus kicks. One of Zagreb's best kept secrets are the rarely seen patios and courtyards of former palaces and grand houses in the Upper Town. They

open their doors in July reminding visitors of the architecture of Paris or Budapest. Not to be missed is one of the quirkiest-ever museums, at home in Zagreb: The thought-provoking Museum of Broken Relationships, whose name says it all. Zagreb is more than you ever imagined. Really.

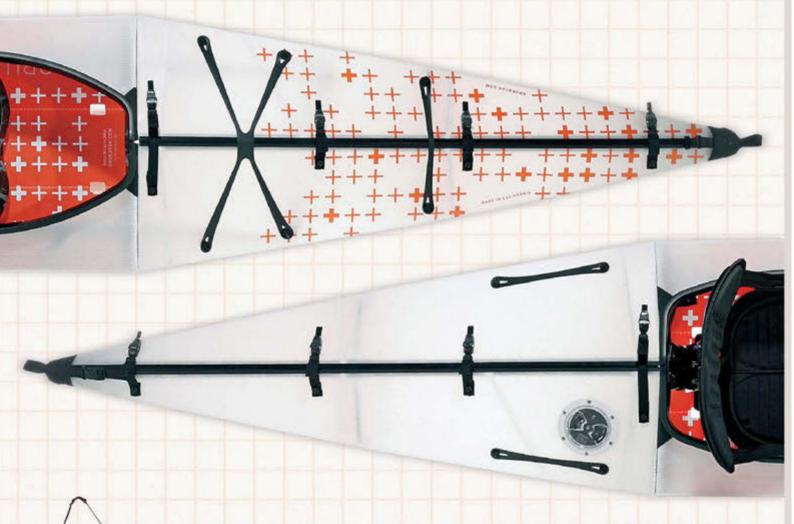


www.zagreb-touristinfo.hr



GEEK GEAR By George Duffield

Constant advances in computer technology mean that ordinary people can now design and construct the most complex of materials and objects. 'The Singularity' may be approaching, but until it arrives it is human rather than artificial intelligence that is granting our every Geekish wish.





BAY+ FOLD-UP KAYAK

This is not cheap – but then a kayak that folds up and yet is strong enough to take the most demanding white water shouldn't be. It's an extraordinary slice of 21st-century computer-aided design. Check it on to a plane next time you go to Peru, then explore the most remote rivers on earth. Then refold and repeat. www.orukayak.com; about £900

SAWYER WATER FILTER

Never buy water abroad again, just refill this hollow-fibre membrane filter from the tap or a river and you are good to go. The brand also makes larger gravity-fed systems for bigger camping trips. Apparently these filters even stop waterborne viruses, but the Geek isn't paid enough to have tested this. www.sawyereurope.com; from £29.95

HANDIRACK INFLATABLE ROOF RACK

The Geek loves a bargain. How about solving your 'I need a bigger rental car' woes for less than £60? Get a HandiRack inflatable roof rack and simply strap your extra luggage to the top of your compact but already overpriced rental car. Job done. www.handiworld.com; £59.99

WOOL SIDEKICK CORD WRAP

Half of the art of travel is storing gadgets elegantly. The Wool Sidekick Cord Wrap allows you to store power cords up in a tidy roll made, as the name suggests, of wool (though it is also available in leather). If you are a true Geek, this is glorious; if you are not, why are you still reading? shop.coolmaterial.com; about £20

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HOUMOUS



EAT ME By Joanna Weinberg

In Israel, houmous is not a food, it's a national pastime. So great is the obsession that even during the intifada years, Jews would slip into Arab quarters to guzzle the best houmous they could find. Visit Jaffa, Tel Aviv's Arab neighbour,

and on a nondescript back street you'll find Abu Hassan, Israel's most famous houmous joint. It's more a hole in the wall than a restaurant, with vast pots of chickpeas bubbling in the background and a few laminate-topped tables under strip lighting. The queue, even at 10 in the morning, snakes around the corner. When they run out, they run out for the day – houmous is not something that can, or indeed should, be quickly put together.

This houmous is a different creature entirely from the grainy, garlicky dip we are used to buying at British supermarkets. Velvety smooth and almost whipped, with no harsh garlic notes, the swirl of beige is speckled with ground cumin and sweet paprika, with a generous dribble of olive oil over the top. Crucially, it has never been near a fridge.

Houmous, incidentally, is the Arabic word for chickpeas. In full, the paste's name should be houmous bi tahini, and no dip or spread made from avocado, beetroot, bean, squash or other ingredient should bear its name. Over

there, you wouldn't make your own houmous - it would be like making your own butter. But there is something so perceptibly different about Israeli houmous that making it yourself here is the only way to get close.

THIS MONTH'S RECIPE

Start, if possible, the night before, with top-quality, extra-large

chickpeas. Soak in twice their volume of filtered water with a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda. Rinse thoroughly and bring to the boil in fresh water, with no salt but another half-teaspoon of bicarb. Cook for about 1.5 hours, skimming off any foam, until so soft they are collapsing, adding peeled garlic cloves for the last 30 minutes. If that's a step too far, buy instead the very large, soft-cooked chickpeas in glass jars that are available from Spanish or Middle Eastern delis. Rinse and simmer with a little bicarb and two garlic cloves per 150g dried or 300g cooked. Drain completely, then blend with 125g tahini (Lebanese or Israeli) and four tablespoons of lemon juice per 300g cooked chickpeas, using a little of the cooking water to loosen until you have a smooth, almost mousse-like consistency. Taste, season with salt

(you'll need more than you expect), and eat as it cools, with a swirl of olive oil and a scattering of ground cumin and sweet paprika. As for the pitta bread – that's another story altogether.



DRINK ME By Malcolm Gluck

IT IS A MAGNIFICENTLY

BOLD, ALMOST SAVAGE

ATTACK OF CONFIDENT

RICH BERRIES

My colleague's choice of food this month is one that allows me to indulge in the wine writer's favourite pastime. This involves the critic answering the question so many people love to pose: tell us, please, what

was the most exciting wine you drank over the past 12 months? I emphasise drank. Not merely tasted. In a working year one may smell, gargle and spit out 5,000 wines, but the bottles one lingers over, sometimes for hours, are those one has at home or at the homes of wine-loving friends or

as the guest of a winemaker.

I can cite fascinating encounters in 2014 STRUCTURED RED WITH A with a saline Chardonnay from Chile's Atacama Desert, a potent Shiraz from an inhospitable peak in South Africa, combative reds from the Georgian Saperavi grape, and aromatic whites from

the Koshu grape of Kyoto and the Assyrtiko grown in Santorini. But overshadowing all of these is a red called **Stobi 2011** from the Republic of Macedonia, made from the native Vranec grape.

Stobi gets its name courtesy of the ancient Paeonian language (so this is no parvenu or New World upstart). The wine did a Sunday lunch of rabbit casserole proud, then, a day and a half later, a third of a bottle still left to finish, the liquid remained in

robust health. It was sufficient for Monday's dinner cheeses. You may ask, 'If this wine was so toothsome, why not finish the bottle at one sitting?' Well, I was curious to see how the residue would perform after so much exposure to air. I was not disappointed. Stobi 2011 is well suited to the cuisine of the Middle East, of which houmous forms such a substantial part, so it is apposite I draw your attention to it now. It is a magnificently structured red with a bold, almost savage attack of confident rich berries, finely roasted and crushed as if with mocha coffee

beans and toasted nuts. It carries hints of juniper, a touch of liquorice and an undertone of chocolate spice. Its tannins are resplendently interwoven with the acidity (hence its ability to remain drinkable whilst breathing for 36 hours). The finish on the palate is a surge of polished fruit of a kind usually associated

with a great Pauillac or an Hermitage in a warm vintage.

So it is, ladies and gentlemen, that this wine, Stobi 2011, is my red wine of 2014 and of the year so far. It is on sale at branches of Wine Rack for... how much? How much did you say? Only £9.99? You could easily spend 10 times that on certain clarets and not receive so sensual an experience, so overwhelming a liquid thrill.

ILLUSTRATIONS: HEATHER GATLEY PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK



SAN side up

2015 sees some not-to-be-missed events and a number of brilliant additions at Sani Resort: we check out the latest in Greek chic



ver since Sani Resort opened its five-star doors almost 30 years ago it has been at the forefront of luxury European travel. Owned by the same local family who bought the land in the Sixties, the present generation remains as committed as ever to evolving, but also protecting, this beautiful environment. Nowhere in Europe is quite like this family-owned, all-encompassing hideaway. Located on the stunning Kassandra Peninsula, the resort is set in a private 1,000-acre eco reserve that includes the Sani Wetlands (one of the most important bird

sanctuaries in Greece), fragrant pine forests, olive groves and five miles of unspoiled sandy beaches.

The location sets the perfect scene for four exceptional hotels: the elegant Sani Beach Hotel, family-friendly Sani Beach Club, spa-centric Porto Sani Village and the boutique Sani Asterias Suites. Each property has its own distinctive character while sharing all the standout Sani facilities: which include a new crèche and mini club at Porto Sani Village and outdoor heated pools throughout the resort all year round. There's a marina lined with shops, bars, cafes and restaurants; three spas, all run by luxury French brand Anne Semonin; two exceptional water sports centres and a seemingly infinite number of landbased activities. But Sani Resort is probably best known for its food and family, the two being inextricably linked in Greek culture. The restaurants have always been a standout feature and today range from authentic Greek to the freshest Italian and meltin-the-mouth Japanese. The half-board Dine Around progamme covers 14 venues and remains one of the best in the business while the food festival Sani



Clockwise from top: Sunset walks on the beach at Sani Hill; The indoor spa pool at Porto Sani Village; Views at Sani Resort; Sani Beach Club Junior Suite



Gourmet is an annual highlight. This year it continues with the theme Cuisines of the Silk Road and will feature pop-up cooking stations and restaurants serving dishes from Azerbaijan to India (May 8-17). Sani's family ethic is its other key strength welcoming children of all ages with crèches and mini clubs that cater from as little as four months. Children (and even teenagers) rarely want to leave, raving about everything from mini Olympics to hip-hop and football academies.

But despite its ongoing success Sani never rests on its laurels. This year it has added yet more strings to its bow with a new lounge, a couples' spa suite and the fantastic three-bedroom suites all at Porto Sani Village. Super-chic in design, the latter feature a master suite and two double bedrooms, plus a gorgeous lounge and a trio of marble bathrooms. Big enough for families of seven (or a group of six adults) they also come with four hours of daily complimentary babysitting.

For further information call 0800 949 6809 or visit saniresort.com

Hot ticket

Sani Festival (sanifestival.gr) has run for more than 20 years, celebrating music and performing arts against a spectacular backdrop. This year it takes place from July 10 to August 14 and features a brilliant line-up. Don't miss out.



Q

I hear the traffic is dreadful in Istanbul. How would you recommend travelling across the city?



By front crawl. For a few hours every summer the Bosphorus is off-limits to shipping and the annual Cross-Continental Swim begins. Thousands take the plunge, from Turks and tourists to international pro teams who can be seen, seconds before the whistle blows, shaving their bodies to decrease drag. It may sound like a slog at 6.5km, but it is downstream and you're swept along by the swift current between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara. A few tips for this traffic-busting journey. This ain't no fashion parade: leave the Heidi Klein at home and slip into a Speedo one-piece (it's not cold enough for a wetsuit). The start is



MICHELLE JANA CHAN WRITER

a bit of a bun-fight so forget about pacing yourself and go full throttle until you escape the fray. Pause midstream to tread water and gaze at Istanbul's domes, minarets and grand palaces. Don't leave it too late to turn towards the finishing marker on the western bank; the current can be so quick here that you're swept past the post, and there's no turning back. If you're struggling, wave your swimming cap in the air to be plucked out by brawny boys in rescue boats. It's a party at the finish line, with great camaraderie, so catch your breath and then celebrate. The successful can brag that they've swum from Asia to Europe – and beaten the traffic!

Q

Is it ever worth hiring a guide?



All of us have seen shuffling, dispirited groups following someone holding up a miniature flag and reciting a monotone spoken text on the architectural features of a cathedral. It's not encouraging. My first experience of a guide was in Palm Springs. I didn't look forward to it but I learnt more in two hours than I had in any other week of independent travelling (how palm trees are planted by pooping coyotes, for example). I've since been swimming with a marine biologist in a Malaysian coral reef, had geothermal phenomena explained to me in Yellowstone, walked in primeval jungle in Borneo with a guide who was moved nearly to tears by his first sighting of a slow loris in



TIMOTHY O'GRADY WRITER

three years, and experienced riparian life in Vietnam in a way that would have been impossible without the Mekong River local who guided me. A guide I had in Kenya was such an unforgettable human presence that I put him into a novel years later. Guides, particularly in wildernesses, are often people who do not easily find a salaried outlet for their knowledge and enthusiasms, or who, like my Bornean guide, were slowly dying in an office job until they realised themselves as guides. They are usually

there because they feel the place deeply and want you to understand and feel it too. Pound for pound, they are, in communicative capacity, general job satisfaction and performance, ahead of any other profession I know.

Q

I love surfing and eating. Where should I go for my next trip?



The Mexican state of Oaxaca is the perfect place for a surfing gourmand. Surf first, in Puerto Escondido, and then head inland to Oaxaca, a seven-hour bus ride from the coast. At the Mercado 20 de Noviembre you'll find the most delicious yellow mole empanadas with a mouth-watering chile de agua relish, and great breakfasts – char-grilled steak, guacamole made in front of you, hot chocolate, shredded cabbage, huge fruit salads. A more upmarket breakfast place is Café Casa Oaxaca, a half-hour walk away, but well worth it for the delicious eggs baked on a leaf of the hoja santa plant and the best hot chocolate in Oaxaca (made with water, not milk).

Round the corner, Itanoni specialises in corn dough - it's the best place for quesadillas, eses and tacos. Try the chilli taco or tamales with Oaxacan mole. On a Sunday, grab a cab and drive 40 minutes to Tlacolula. Its market is a riot of clothes, ingredients and shopping, but in the centre vendors sell slowcooked goat and lamb barbacoa and birria - you will brunch like a king. Alternatively, go with a local, buy your ingredients and cook them on the communal open fires. It will probably be the most memorable meal of your life.



PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES BEDFORD

THOMASINA MIERS CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Q

I've heard about an island off Oman that sends anyone who stays on it a bit loopy. Can I stay there? Should I?



The place you're thinking of is Telegraph Island, or Jazirat Al-Maqlab, near the Musandam Peninsula. It's tiny – about the size of a football field. In the 19th century British engineers laid a telegraph line between Britain and India, and built a station on this little landmass, only accessible via looping, winding fjords. Folklore has it that the arid conditions, combined with the sheer tedium, caused the



BECKY LUCAS, ACTING DEPUTY EDITOR, ONLINE

combined with the sheer tedium, caused the gradual mental unravelling and mysterious deaths of many of the men stationed there to protect the cable. This, apparently, is the source of the phrase 'going round the bend'. Still want to check it out? Maybe you're already barmy. It's great for a memorable overnight adventure, but only for those who like to live life on the (curvy) edge. Head to the harbour at nearby Khasab and charter a dhow. Expect to haggle; about £35 for a ride to the island and back the next morning is a decent deal. Take food,

remains of one small building on the island.

Build a fire, tell ghost stories, play music as loud as you like and splash around in the sea's 'firebeams', or phosphoresence,

drink, a sleeping bag and anything else you

may need - there's nothing but the rocky

before lying back and gazing at the extra-bright stars above. Spare a thought for the men who spent months watching the very same stars, and hope you don't suffer their fate.



I'm planning a week's holiday in Cornwall with my family (six adults and four children aged three to 11). Any idea where we might find a seaside house or apartment to rent?



St Ives is brilliant for large family groups, as everything is on your doorstep, with enough beaches, shops, pubs, restaurants and art galleries crammed onto this little peninsula to keep anyone happy. And if the mercantile hustle and bustle of Fore Street becomes overwhelming, just head off on a mildly challenging, rugged and heathery coastal walk to Zennor, a five-mile jaunt with endless ocean views, seals bobbing in the waves and the Tinners Arms at the end. Upper Saltings (bookable through



CHRISTY WARD
MEAT CORRESPONDENT

Owners Direct) would be perfect for your gang. This spectacular apartment in a former sail loft on Porthmeor Beach has three double/twin rooms and a six-bunk, pirate's-ship-like kids' room that will drive the younger contingent wild with glee. The big, shiny kitchen is fully equipped for major cooking projects (alternatively, the Balancing Eel fish-and-chip shop is three minutes' walk away), and there's a window seat the size of a double bed for stretching out and watching wetsuited maniacs surfing in all weathers. Add a vast living area with long sofas and a large dining table and you have all you need for a week of family fun.



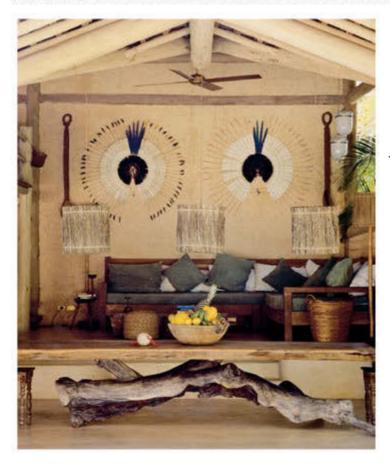




WHERE ARE YOU? COMPETITION PRIZE

WIN A WEEK'S HOLIDAY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA WITH THE SUNLUX COLLECTION

From your Bedroom window at Table Bay Hotel, watch the golden morning light illuminate South Africa's most mesmerising landmark. Set on Cape Town's V&A Waterfront, the hotel was opened by another of the country's icons, Nelson Mandela, and forms part of the SunLux Collection's Golden Triangle portfolio. For an eve-opening tour of Southern Africa, continue to the Royal Livingstone in Zambia, where all bedrooms have a private terrace overlooking the Zambezi River, then **The Palace of the Lost City** in Sun City, where attractions include safari, a vast maze and Nile crocodiles lurking near the 13th hole on the golf course. Enter this month's Where Are You? competition and you could win a six-night holiday with the SunLux Collection, staying two nights at each of the three hotels mentioned above. The prize, worth £3,300, includes accommodation on a bed-and-breakfast basis, as well as flights from London to Johannesburg and transfers. The holiday must be booked three months in advance and taken before December 2015, subject to availability. For more details, call +27 11 780 7878 or visit www.suninternational.com/sunlux



THIS MONTH'S READER OFFER

Save £2,000 on a 10-night city and coast holiday in Brazil

HE BEACHES OF Rio are legendary, known as much for the beautiful-people-watching as the gorgeous scenery. They are also the perfect spot to ease into the laid-back Brazilian lifestyle, preferably while sipping a Caipirinha in the beach hut laid on by five-star Hotel Fasano. Continue the toes-in-the-sand vibe with a short hop up the coast to Bahia, and the clifftop village of Trancoso, where Uxua Casa is set right on the bougainvillaeafilled square. After a day spent by the quartz pool, feast on moqueca of lobster in the candle-lit restaurant. Condé Nast Traveller readers have the chance to save 18 per cent on a trip to Brazil, staying three nights in a Superior Oceanfront Room at Hotel Fasano Rio de Janeiro and five nights at Uxua Casa Hotel & Spa in Trancoso with Journey Latin America. The price, from £4,395 per person, includes flights, transfers, breakfast and an excursion to Christ the Redeemer in Rio. This holiday must be taken between 15 April and 31 June, or 1 September and 30 November 2015.

FOR MORE DETAILS OR TO BOOK

Call Journey Latin America on +44 20 8600 1881, quoting Condé Nast Traveller Reader Offer, or visit www.journeylatinamerica.co.uk

Arabian HIDEALAY

Ultimate luxury in a unique beachside hideaway – discover the splendour of enchanting Abu Dhabi and the opulence of the Emirates Palace



n Abu Dhabi landmark in its own right, the 1001 Nights-style Emirates Palace experience is unique in every way. Sporting 114 domes that soar 80 metres into the clear blue skies, the magnificent building encapsulates a truly magical splendour.

Set within the city, yet 'floating' in its own dream landscape of gardens and pools, the Emirate Palace has almost a mile of private beach. Guest rooms and suites are furnished in marble, gold and luxurious fabrics (and fabulous Arabian Sea and garden views naturally come as standard). Fifteen superb restaurants and bars offer authentic cuisines best enjoyed alfresco across the palace's terraces: Emirati fine dining with exquisite local specialities at Mezlai; tantalising Italian cooking at Mezzaluna; award-winning modern Chinese cuisine at glamorous Hakkasan. And in between divine wining

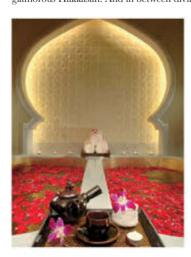
and dining, there are endless opportunities at Emirates Palace to indulge yourself in other ways. Frolic in one of two swimming pools: a family-friendly pool with water slides, and a grown-up option complete with Jacuzzi and swim-up bar.

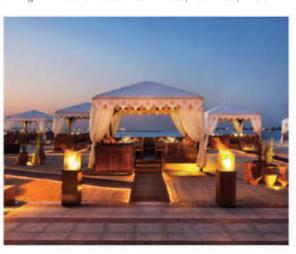
Sit in Abu Dhabi's omnipresent sunshine and admire the superyachts lined up in the hotel's spectacular private marine. Or, for the ultimate downtime, relinquish time and stress with a relaxing treatment at the resort's blissful, Moroccan-inspired Palace Spa, where wondrous products (including pearls, gold and minerals) and indulgent treatments will bestow a sense of balance and serenity.

Alternatively, head for the heart of the vibrant capital of the United Arab Emirates. Abu Dhabi, where

Clockwise from top: Emirates Palace exterior; Le Vendôme; BBQ Al Qasr; Emirates Palace Spa







historic culture and world-class attractions combine in a truly global hub. Experience the Formula 1 highlight, the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, staged at the spectacular Yas Marina Circuit; the thrills of Ferrari World, the world's largest indoor theme park; or the exciting Yas Waterworld, spanning an area the size of 20 football pitches. Or perhaps simply slow down and enjoy a gentle wander around the extraordinary Saadiyat Cultural District, with starchitect-designed museums such as the Louvre and the Guggenheim opening soon.

An Arabian palace set beside shimmering blue waters; a traditional Arabian city that's leading the world in modern-day wonders. We defy you not to feel like royalty. For further information and reservations, please call +971 (0) 2 690 8888 or email reservations@emiratespalace.ae

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LEFT: BAR AT THE RITZ-CARLTON, CHENGDU; ORIENTAL PEARL TOWER IN SHANGHAI; JIUZHAIGOU NATURAL RESERVE: DANCERS, HENAN; THE RITZ-CARLTON

There is more to China than super-fast expanding cities; visit the bucolic hillsides of Moganshan, the edge of the mighty Tibetan plateau near Chengdu and the ancient temples at Luoyang

> ombined with gold on the national flag, illuminated in scarlet on Chinese New Year lanterns and the etched in vermilion on the walls of the Forbidden City, red is China's dominant colour. But snowy mountain peaks, verdant tea valleys and effervescent contemporary art paint China in a more diverse palette.

The futuristic Shanghai skyline serves as a blueprint for China's fast-changing cities. The 474-metre-high Sky Walk 100 offers dazzling evening views of the rainbow-neon skyline from the 100thfloor of the Shanghai World Financial Centre (swfc-observatory. com). Searching between the skytowers also reveals elegant touches of colour. Tap into the red-hot contemporary arts scene at Power Station of Art (powerstationofart.org), housed in a historic riverside power plant with a towering smokestack that lights up like a thermometer. Culinary shades shine brightest at one-table restaurant Ultraviolet (uvbypp.cc), serving a 20-course multi-sensorial degustation, with each course accompanied by 360-degree laser visuals, sounds and scents.

The western city of Chengdu (gochengdu.cn) is a gateway to the beautiful alpine scenery of Sichuan province, particularly the

mountain valleys, waterfalls and mirrored lakes of Jiuzhaigou Natural Reserve (jiuzhai.com). Winters are cold but the stunning views of the edge of the Tibetan Plateau are enhanced when the mountainsides are frosted with snow. Chengdu is revered across China for its pepper-laden hotpot cuisine, and was named a UNESCO City of Gastronomy in 2010. Visitors can stay in style at The Ritz-Carlton Chengdu (ritzcarlton.com) or St Regis Chengdu (starwoodhotels.com/stregis) and head to one of the restaurants on Jinli Street to sample kung pao chicken, mapo tofu (spicy beancurd) or huiguorou (twice cooked pork belly) - all liberally spiced with doubanjiang, a red paste of beans and Sichuan peppercorns.

If escaping China's frenetic urbanity appeals, the bucolic hillsides clothed with bamboo trees and tea plantations at Moganshan, a three hour drive from Shanghai, have beckoned weekend city dwellers for over a cenutury. Communing with nature is the specialty of Naked Stables Private Reserve (nakedretreats.cn), where guests can kick back in a treetop villa designed in rustic-chic style with an outdoor tub overlooking a forest. Get active by horse-riding across hillside tracks, or take part in a Chinese bamboo weaving class

The mountainside Shaolin Temple (shaolin.org.cn) at Luoyang, Henan Province, has gained global notoriety for its orange robed Buddhist monks practising ancient martial arts among wing-tipped pagodas. Journey with Beijing-based The China Guide (thechinaguide.com) for a lesson in Jackie Chan-style kung fu techniques, plus a chance to watch the high-kicking experts in action.

LIMITED EDITION







Check out Hong Kong's buzzing art scene in the city's colourful backstreets, and walk the beautiful hiking trails in the hills behind the world's most famous neon-hued skyline

irst impressions of the self-titled Asia's World City invariably reflect on the neon dazzle of Victoria Harbour and the frenetic street buzz of Kowloon and Central. Hong Kong proudly plays up its 21st-century urban dynamism, but search the side lanes, street markets and outlying islands and an entirely different portrait is revealed. The multi-hued spectacle of Hong Kong's after dark skyline is best viewed from on high while sipping a speciality cocktail or a glass of chilled bubbles.

Double-level windows make Aqua (aqua.com.hk) a prime 30th-floor perch to watch the nightly Symphony of Lights (discoverhongkong. com) multimedia show dance across the harbourside facades. For an even greater high, the vertigo-inducing views from the aquamarine themed Ozone on the 118th floor of The Ritz-Carlton, Hong Kong (ritzcarlton.com) befit its title as the highest bar in the world.

Back at ground level, horse racing has been a part of Hong Kong society since the 1840s, and the floodlit Wednesday evening races (September-July) at Happy Valley (happyvalleyracecourse.com) betray a festival-type atmosphere. The oval-shaped course sits amid soaring skytowers making racing at Happy Valley an immersive urban experience. Dress in style, bring a few dollars to place on your chosen horse and cheer it down the home straight with the locals.

At weekends, Hong Kongers head for the hills and the Dragon Back Trail (discoverhongkong.com) is a favoured spot to escape the city beat. This beautiful nine-mile hike traverses an undulating ridge resembling a dragon's back. The coastal section overlooks horseshoe-shaped coves and the outlying Ninepins islands, before



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HONG KONGS SKYLINE: THE VIEW FROM THE DRAGON'S BACK HIKING TRAIL: ROOM AT THE MIRA MOON: THE LOBBY OF THE MIRA MOON looping through forested hills across the Dragon's Back saddle and sloping down to Big Wave Bay. From the beach, a further 30-minute walk brings you to Shek O, a small coastal village with several bars and restaurants. Home to the annual Art Basel Hong Kong (artbasel. com/en/hong-kong) show and the Asia Contemporary Art Fair (asiacontemporaryart.com), Hong Kong is considered one of Asia's

foremost destinations for eclectic art. Top gallery picks include Pearl Lam Galleries (pearllam.com) and Hanart TZ (facebook. com/hanart.TZ.gallery) for challenging Chinese contemporary art, and M+ (westkowloon.hk/ en/mplus) for installation art and design.

Staying in style can be equally as colourful as Hong Kong's streetscapes. In Kowloon, Mira Moon Hong Kong (miramoonhotel. com) is the more modish, Chinese-accented sibling to the kaleidoscopically dressed Mira Hong Kong. Across the water in Central, the suites at The Landmark Mandarin Oriental (mandarinoriental.com/landmark) are styled in charcoal, crème and gold, while a burning orange O-shaped sunset motif offsets the lime leather sofas and mirrored glass counter at its ultra-swish MO Bar.



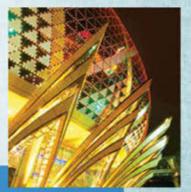


Behind Macau's vibrant casino strip there is also a thriving cultural scene with world-class museums showcasing the best of modern and historical art

rom whichever angle it is viewed, Macau is an enigma. Located on a peninsula in southern China and governed by Portugal from the mid 16th century until 1999, the city betrays a beguiling blend of Portuguese architectural and Cantonese cultural influences. Macanese cuisine fuses the ingredients of Guangzhou with the culinary panache of Porto and spices collected by seafaring traders in India and Africa. In combination with this is the Cotai Strip (cotaistrip.com), a collection of casino resorts that out-kitsch Las Vegas.

Macau does culture as well as casinos. Chinese-American architect I.M. Pei, best known for his Pyramide du Louvre in Paris, has masterminded two of Macau's finest museums. A great option for kids, the conical Macau Science Centre (msc.org.mo/en) by the waterfront explores different aspects of science through a space simulation machine, 3D theatre and other interactive exhibits arranged around a dramatic, spiraling atrium. The soaring galleries at the Macau Museum of Art (mam.gov.mo/e) showcase an impressive roster of exhibitions, ranging







from the satirical modern art of Beijing-based Yue Minjun to 19thcentury Macau oil paintings. A colourful calendar of celebrations

includes the A-Ma Festival (en.macautourism. gov.mo) commemorating Macau's most popular deity A-Ma, the Goddess of Seafarers, from whom Macau (A-Ma Gao, or Place of A-Ma) is believed to derive its name. In June, Nam Van Lake is the setting for the exciting International Dragon Boat Race festival, while the Macau International Fireworks Contest (fireworks.macautourism.gov. mo) attracts teams of firework display specialists from around the world who light up the skies in

With its flame-shaped, reflective gold façade and crystal-encrusted interiors, Grand Lisboa Hotel is deliberately designed to impress. It's also home to Macau's only three-Michelin-starred restaurants (grandlisboahotel.com/dining). Hidden behind a remote-controlled steel door, The Eight is a lavish temple to contemporary Cantonese cuisine, with ebony-and-scarlet interiors and more than 50 lunchtime dim sum selections. Within the Grand Lisboa's golden and crystal dome, Robuchon au

quail stuffed with foie gras, accompanied by a 11,300-label wine list and skyline city views from the 43rd floor.

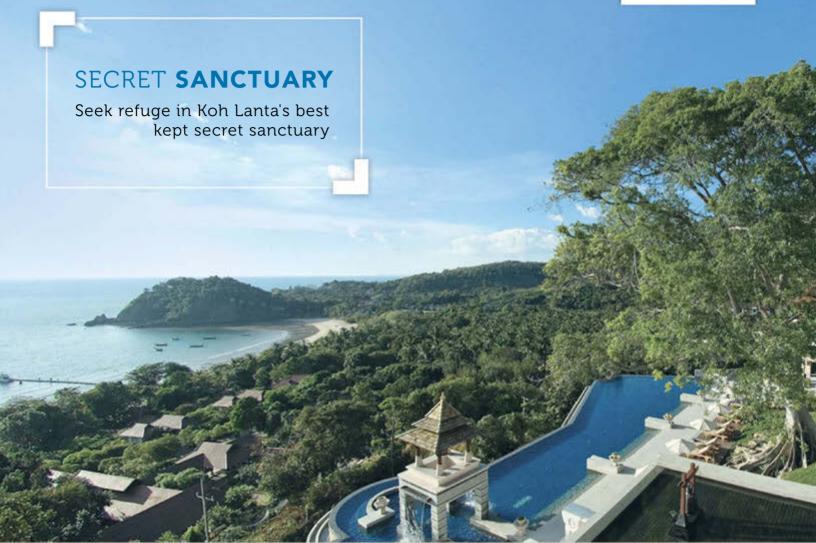
OLYMPIA CACTUS CROCUS HARVEY NICHOLS. KIRKORIGINALS.COM 3. CHARLOTTE HENRILLOYD. SANDALS, LLISHED

Dôme serves Joël Robuchon's fine French creations, like caramelised



History buffs will be thrilled by Macau's fine portfolio of classical European architecture in the compact historic quarter. Download the free Heritage Trail map from the Macau Tourism website (macautourism.gov.mo) and selfguide your own tour of Portuguese colonial gems, such as the pastelshaded Senado Square, canaryyellow St Dominic's Church and the magnificent Leal Senado building, dating from 1784.













Do you remember the first time you fell in love with nature? The first time you felt soft, warm sand between your toes or discovered that intoxicating scent of luscious greenery.

Amidst 100 acres of tropical vegetation, direct access to over 900 meters of pristine sandy beach, lose yourself in the sights and sounds of nature, with buzzing cicadas, birds and eagles hovering majestically above, and mischievous squirrels and monkeys on the trees surrounding you. With 121 accommodation units comprising of serene villas, elegant suites and quaint rooms, this unique resort surrounded by famous snorkeling and diving spots takes you closer to nature than you could ever imagine.

Are you ready to uncover Koh Lanta's best kept secret?



Don't be tempted to stay put in Seoul's haven of delicious cuisine, head out of town to discover ancient temples, volcanic islands and private beaches

lanked by the Yellow Sea to the west and the East Sea to the east, South Korea occupies the southern half of the divided Korean Peninsula. Granite and limestone mountains cover 70 percent of its landmass, while volcanic Jeju Island offers contrasting geological features.

The Korean capital of Seoul is renowned for its historic palaces, sleek shopping and delicious cuisine, but the Seoul City Wall is a less familiar gem. Originally built in 1396 to surround Hanyang (present-day Seoul), the eight-metre high crenellated construct wound across four mountains, Bugaksan, Naksan, Namsan and Inwangsan. The protective stone wall has been partially restored and the undulating 1.3-mile Mount Naksan section makes for a scenic one-hour walk through old Seoul, while the 2.5-mile Mount Inwangsan section is steeper and rockier, but affords fine views over the capital.

Overlooking Seoul's picturesque mountain Namsan, Banyan Tree Club & Spa Seoul (banyantree.com) offers easy access to the capital's best shopping and sightseeing, plus a Banyan Tree Spa offering indulgent therapies that utilise the purifying properties of Korean green tea.

The volcanic geology of Jeju Island (known locally as Jeju-do) off the southern coast of Korea provides a rugged contrast to the peninsula. Explore its unique land and coastal rock formations with Artisans of Leisure (artisansofleisure.com) on a nine-day Highlights of Korea tour. Trek to Sunrise Peak (Seongsan Ilchulbong), a volcanic ridge affording spectacular views over the island, stroll along the volcanic cliffs of Jusangjeolli; explore an impressive lava tube and hike the slopes of Mount Halla, a perfect cone that dominates the island.

Overlooking eight acres of landscaped gardens extending towards the craggy Pacific Ocean coastline, The Shilla Jeju (shilla.net/jeju) features a spacious private beach house with a wooden verandah leading onto Jungmun Beach, and a small 'glamping village' with eight deluxe tents featuring a fireplace, a healing foot spa and a private barbecue area.



CLOCKWISE FROM

KOREAN CERAMIC TILES: DONGDAEMUN

DESIGN PLAZA

IN SEOUL

BELOW: THE POOL AT

BANYAN TREE SEOUL;





The island of Taiwan has a geography that has been custom-made for adventure, and the culinary scene is an exciting journey all of its own

he small, leaf-shaped island of Taiwan resides off the southeastern coast of China at the western edge of the Pacific Ocean. Sculpted by tectonic movements across the centuries, Taiwan's dramatic mountains, lakes and river valleys were custom-made for adventure.

Hitting the road enables you to get up close and personal with Taiwan's craggy coastlines, steeped mountain ranges and national parks. In Motion Asia (inmotionasia.com) creates customised cycling tours, including a tough climb from Taichung up the highest road in northeast Asia to the hot springs at the foot of the Central Cross Island Link, followed by an exciting descent. Less advanced cyclists will enjoy a leisurely ride through Kenting National Park on Taiwan's southern tip to enjoy the cliffs, sand dunes and elaborate coral formations.

Taiwanese food culture is Chinese in origin although it betrays distinctive Japanese influences in its seafood dishes. The neon-lit night markets (eng.taiwan.net.tw) are prime spots for tasting a multitude of local snacks. Huaxi Night Market is perhaps the most well known, where delicacies on display include oyster omelette and cuttle fish soup. The newly hip Ximending district comes alive after dark with grilled pork sausages stuffed with pickles and steaming bowls of Taipei's famed beef noodles being the top snacking picks. Salt-steamed shrimp, fried duck tongue and locally harvested guava fruit are among the treats to try at Liuhe Night Market in the southern city of Kaohsiung.

Opening in spring in a tree-lined Taipei neighbourhood is the 90-room amba Taipei Zhongshan (amba-hotels.com). This funky eco-chic hotel features a green curtain formed by a biodiversity of native plants, including wild grape, honeysuckle and Buddha's lamp, plus a giant pop-art mural by local artist Alice Wang and installations crafted from reclaimed window frames. A two-hour drive into the mountains from Seoul is the beautiful ski resort of Pyeongchang. Nestled amid the snow-capped Taebaek Mountain peaks is the 238-room Alpensia Pyeongchang Resort (ihg.com), offering access to world-class winter sports on alpine slopes that will host the 2018 Winter Olympics.







Discover our secrets and share









CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: GARDENS BY THE BAY: PAGODA STREET IN CHINATOWN: PULAU UBIN ISLAND: ROOFTOP DAD AR AT NAUMI HOTEL: COLOUFFUL BUILDING FACADE IN LITTLE: INDIA SINGAPORE



Singapore is celebrating its 50th year of independence in 2015 with a feast of cultural and architectural openings all around the island city state

elebrating its Golden Jubilee as a city-state in 2015, Singapore's diverse cultural composition is the result of its geographic positioning at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, which has brought traders, voyagers and travellers to its shores for centuries.

To mark Singapore's 50th anniversary of independence (singapore50.sg), a new Jubilee Walking Trail will be launched through the heart of the city. The trail winds from the slopes of Fort Canning Hill through the historic landmarks and specially commissioned artworks of the riverside civic district, before crossing a new 220-metre pedestrian bridge connecting Merlion Park to the Gardens by the Bay (gardensbythebay.com.sg). The most anticipated cultural opening of 2015 is the new National Gallery of Singapore (nationalgallery.sg). A huge collection of Southeast Asian art from the 19th century to present day will be exhibited in two refurbished classical buildings, the neoclassical City Hall, dating from 1929, and the adjacent former Supreme Court, which opened in 1939 and is notable for its eye-catching Corinthian columns.

A combination of tropical ingredients and spices and imported culinary influences from across Asia have helped make food a Singaporean obsession. Celebrating this fusion of flavours, the Singapore Food Festival (yoursingapore.com) serves up beach barbeques, traditional Peranakan dishes and curry buffets each July. For authentic Singaporean fare, head to a neighbourhood 'hawker centre', such as Maxwell Road or the Newton Food Centre. Hungry locals gather at these large food courts for cheap and tasty Chinese-inspired dishes, such as Tian Tian Chicken Rice and Bak Kut Teh, a herbal soup with pork ribs. Alternatively, grab a cab and had east to Jumbo Seafood (jumboseafood.com.sg) for a signature Singapore treat, black pepper chilli crab.

The imprints of different immigrant cultures define modern Singapore. Colours and cultures intersect at every turn, from the restored shophouses of Chinatown to the Hindu temples and market stalls of Little India and the Malay houses and domed mosques of Kampong Glam. Jump in the saddle with Let's Go Bike Singapore (letsgobikesingapore.com) for a guided bicycle tour of these unique districts and learn about the diverse histories that form the Lion City's intriguing backstory.

Staying in style in Singapore is easy, with design-led hotels dotted across the city centre. A short walk from the National Gallery of Singapore is the 73-room Naumi Hotel (naumihotel.com) whose rooftop infinity pool and adjacent lounge afford fine views of Singapore's vertical skyline. Housed in a refurbished former British military building, the 86-room Hotel Fort Canning (hfcsingapore.com) combines heritage-themed interiors with views across the tropical greenery of Fort Canning Park. Several relatively unexplored islands dot the southern coast of Singapore. Take a ferry from Marina South Pier or charter a private boat from Singapore Island Cruise (islandcruise.com. sg) to investigate Lazarus, St. John's, Kusu (Turtle) and Sisters' Islands.

1. PARCE I SUPERCHARGE WATCH, £3.50, MAURICELACROIX.COI 3. MONTECARLO BRACELET IN RED LEATHER WITH SILVER AND ENAMEL CLASP, £149, TATEOSSIAN.COM 4. FRESCOBOL CARIOCA SWIMMERS, £135, FRESCOBOLCARIOCA.COM 5. OB SANDALS, £145, ORLEBARBROWN.COM 6. CENTENARY SUITCASE IN RED / TAN, 28",



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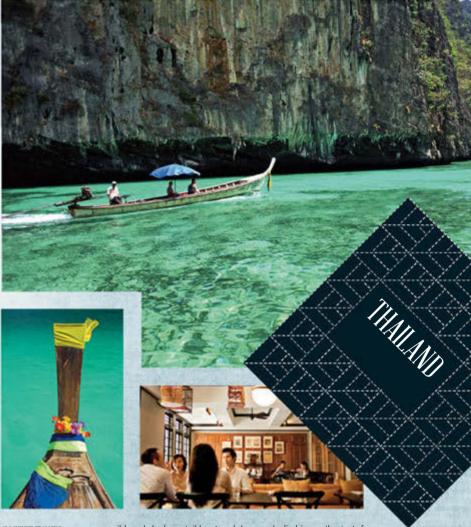
From the bustling streets of Bangkok to the crystal waters of the famous islands of the south, Thailand remains a classic destination in Asia

ocated in the centre of South East Asia, Thailand's elephant head-shaped country curves around the Gulf of Thailand sharing borders with Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, while its trunk extends south to meet the Malay Peninsula where offshore islands are among its most popular attractions

Bedding down in Bangkok is a pleasure, as the Thai capital has an abundance of hip hotels. The gracefully styled eight-room Cabochon (cabochonhotel.com) is a paean to 1920s élan with classically furnished rooms and lounges featuring framed sepiatinted photos, and a rooftop pool deck for refined relaxation amid Bangkok's high-rise clutter. More exuberant is The Atlanta Hotel (theatlantahotelbangkok.com), whose foyer is styled like a 1950s central European theatre, and art deco furniture, fonts and motifs are evident throughout its highly colourful interiors.

Thai cuisine is a complex balance of sweet, spicy, sour and salty flavours, and Artisans of Leisure (artisansofleisure.com) will help you learn the basic techniques during a nine-day Thailand for Foodies culinary quest. Visits to fresh produce markets are combined with plentiful time in the kitchens of leading cooking schools in Bangkok and Chiang Mai to prepare signature dishes such as tom yam kung (hot and sour prawn soup) and gaeng phed ped yang (roast duck curry).

Sometimes overshadowed by more famous Thai islands, such as Phuket and Koh Samui, the myriad bays and tropical forests of Krabi (krabi-tourism.com) have sheltered pirates, merchants and sea gypsies for centuries. Famed for its sheltered beaches lapped by the Andaman Sea, Krabi's natural attractions also include hillside hot springs, sea caves and the limestone cliffs of Railey Beach, which are



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ROOM AT CABOCHON IN BANGKOK; LONG BOAT IN KRABI: THE LOUNGE AT CABOCHON; BANGKOK WATERWAYS AT NIGHT accessible only by long-tail boat and draw rock climbing enthusiasts from around the world. Located at the border with Myanmar 100 miles – or a two-hour train ride – west of Bangkok, Kanchanaburi is Thailand's third-largest province. The dense deciduous forests of Erawan National Park (thainationalparks.com) in the Tenasserim Hills offer picturesque trails that thread between waterfalls and through chamber caves with ancient rock

paintings. If you are lucky, you may spot wild elephants, tigers, gibbons and king cobras, plus serpent eagles circling the skies.

Modern history is also commemorated in the provincial capital, Kanchanaburi, where the Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum (visitkanchanaburi.com) uses interactive displays to narrate the construction by Japanese prisoners of war of Hellfire Pass. Cut through sheer rock, the most notorious stretch of the Thai-Burma 'Death Railway' is still visible. The River Kwai Noi runs through Kanchanaburi, and another landmark to World War II here, the Bridge on the River Kwai, was brought to global attention by David Lean's 1957 movie. Travelling by train is often overlooked, yet Thailand's well-

developed rail network offers a comfortable way to see the countryside. Trailfinders (trailfinders.com) incorporates overnight train trips into its bespoke Thai tours, especially on scenic routes such as Bangkok-Chiang Mai, Bangkok-Nong Khai (for transferring to Laos) and Bangkok-Kanchanaburi.

asia CAPSULE WARDROBE





1. WHITE SHIRT, £60, ORIGINALPENGUIN.CO.UK 2. IVE SHADES IN JET BLACK, £150, SCARLETTOFSOHO.COM 3. DOUBLE WRAP SCOUBIDOU SKY BLUE LEATHER BRACELET WITH SILVER CLASP, £120, TATOSSIAN. COM 4. JUNGLE FEVER MENS BOARD SHORTS £110, WEAREHANDSOME.COM 5. GLOBE-TROTTER JET LEATHER FLIGHT BAG, £950, FROM 35 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON W1S 4JD BAG 6. VINCENT GERANIUM SUEDE DRIVING SHOE, £295, JIMMYCHOO.COM





restaurant, which serves up a gastronomic journey to glorious riverside views.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Set on the waters of the dazzling (literally, at night) Marina Bay - Singapore's latest focal destination for both business and leisure – the five-star Fullerton Bay Hotel is all contemporary luxury inside, with spectacular views of the bay and Singapore skyline outside. And then there is its fantastic setting. Step outside to stand between two iconic heritage buildings, Clifford Pier and Customs House - the



epicentre of Singapore's regional trade and a meeting point for seafarers, traders and immigrants from all walks of life - and soak up the district's inherent sense of adventure and discovery. In its earliest days, hawkers plied its surrounding waters on sampans selling comfort food to warm the stomachs of pioneers who journeyed to Singapore from afar. Today, Clifford Pier remains a melting pot of cultures, with local and Asian specialities, Western classics and cocktails created with local ingredients, in an electrifying fusion that exemplifies Singapore's unique atmosphere. Let the celebrations begin.

READER OFFER

Experience Singapore's culture and heritage and join in the festivities as the city celebrates 50 years of independence in 2015, with specially tailored offers at The Fullerton Hotel and Fullerton Bay Hotel Singapore.

- Fullerton Celebrates SG50: about £240 per Courtyard Room per night.
- Fullerton Bay Celebrates SG50: about £310 per Deluxe Room per night. Both offers inclusive of breakfast, a Merlion mocktail, one-way arrival or departure limousine transfer, a limited-edition Fullerton Merlion Plush Bear, a dining credit of about £25 and Internet access Offers valid until 29 December 2015

For further details or to make a reservation at either hotel, visit www.fullertonhotel.com and fullertonbayhotel.com

ome hotels bear witness to the defining moments in a city's history; some hotels are also a part of that history. This year sees Singapore celebrate its Golden Jubilee. And where better to be a part of it than the majestic Fullerton Hotel, a prominent fixture on Singapore's skyline for more than 80 years? From its strategic location at the mouth of the Singapore River, overlooking the Civic District, The Fullerton Building has witnessed Singapore's historic milestones unfold around it since 1928. Transformed into The Fullerton Hotel in 2001, this architectural icon has poignantly mirrored the nation's growth and progress - from the colonial era to independence in 1965, and on to the 21st century. Today, historic and modern fuse fabulously in some of the most beautiful settings

in the city - from the hotel's Lighthouse rooftop bar, with its sweeping 360-degree view of heritage colonial buildings and city skyscrapers, to Town

Clockwise from top: the Clifford Pier at The **Fullerton Bay Hotel;** The Fullerton Hotel's Rooftop Bar at The Lighthouse; The Fullerton Hotel's award-winning 25-metre outdoor infinity pool; both hotels are strategically positioned on the Marina Bay waterfront







Thrilling jungle adventures and the music festivals of Sarawak juxtapose the vibrant metropolitan cityscape of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia

esiding a few degrees north of the equator, Malaysia's eclectic landscapes range from the vibrant urbanity of Kuala Lumpur and the low-rise pastel-shaded architecture of Georgetown to palmfringed tropical beaches and the primary rainforests of Borneo.

The evolving skyline of Kuala Lumpur (known as KL) is dominated by the Petronas Twin Towers (petronastwintowers.com.my). Ascend to the observation deck on the 86th floor for 360-degree panoramas of the capital and the hills beyond. For an after-dark overview, sip a perfectly mixed martini at View (30th floor of the G Tower Hotel, view.com.mv) or Heli Lounge (34th floor of the Menara KL Tower, facebook.com/ heliloungebar). When hunger pangs strike, Malaysians will point you to Georgetown, a Unesco World Heritage city in Penang (tourismpenang. net.my) that exemplifies the nation's Malay, Indian and Chinese culinary origins. Breakfast on dhosa (pancakes) with coconut chutney in Little India, and lunch at New World Park, where street vendors prepare Penang laksa (noodle soup with prawns) and char kuey teow (wok fried flat noodles). At night, restaurants in restored 1920s shophouses at Nagore Square (facebook.com/nagoresquarepenang) specialise in Chinese regional cuisines, including Sichuan, Shanghainese and Baba Nyonya - a fusion of Chinese and Malay flavours.

New hotels seem to be springing up in Georgetown's pastel-shaded historic buildings. A well-aged classic, however, is still the top pick; having just completed a makeover, the 18 rooms at The Blue Mansion (thebluemansion.com.my) - also known as Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, after its late 19th-century Chinese immigrant founder - surround a colourfully tiled stone courtyard and combine Hakka antique furnishings, art nouveau stained glass and a timeless aura of romance.

Thrilling jungle escapades are the speciality at Sarawak, on the island of Borneo, known as East Malaysia. Use the relaxed riverside city of Kuching (sarawaktourism.com), which is surrounded by dense rainforest, as a base for daytrips to Semenggoh Orangutan Nature Reserve (sarawakforestry.com), to watch these languid 'forest people' (orang is Malay for person, and utan means forest) living semi-wild, and Bako National Park (sarawakforestry.com), where 16 hiking trails, offering the chance to spot proboscis monkeys and monitor lizards, thread through dense tropical greenery before opening onto private beaches.

The Sarawakian jungle is also home to one of Asia's most eclectic musical gatherings. Each August the Sarawak Cultural Village, near Kuching, hosts the

> Rainforest World Music Festival (rwmf.net), whose line up

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: COLLAGE OF OLD WINDOW FRAMES GEORGETOWN; LUNDAYEH NECKLACE BEADS INDIGENOUS TRIBES PEOPLE IN SARAWAK; THE BLUE MANSION IN GEORGETOWN: SEMENGGOH ORANGUTAN NATURE RESERVE























includes traditional folk, instrumental, pop and ethnic musical performers coming from as far afield as Italy, the UK, Canada and India, Mali and Cuba

Wedged between the coast and the highlands of north Sarawak, the city of Miri hosts the annual Borneo Jazz Festival (jazzborneo. com). The relaxed vibes of international jazz can be combined with a thrill-seeking visit to Gunung Mulu National Park. Join Borneo Adventure (borneoadventure.com) for a four-day exploration of this vast highland park's cavernous caves, including the world's largest natural chamber, and ascend the razor-sharp limestone pinnacles that puncture the rainforest canopy at Gunung Api.





Central Vietnam sets the scene for an unforgettable journey of discovery; particularly once Banyan Tree Hotels & Resorts, Abercrombie & Kent and TUMI come in on the action

ietnam is a country where culture meets beach, luxury meets authenticity and adventure meets relaxation. We love its vast appeal, laidback vibe and natural wonderland of jungle, mountain, rice paddies and coast. Vietnam is experiencing a real renaissance and few locations beat Banyan Tree Lăng Cô on the central coast. Located off the beaten track near Bach Ma National Park with the Truong Son mountain range as a backdrop, it is the perfect base from which to venture out and explore this mesmerising destination. The active can trek, cycle, climb mountains and take fishing excursions in traditional basket boats; culture buffs can visit sites such as the Imperial City of Hue, the ancient ruins

of My Son and enchanting Hoi An – while beach lovers can bed down on the resort's three-kilometre stretch of sand

Perfecting the balance between five-star luxury and local authenticity, the design of Banyan Tree Lăng Cô is a contemporary take on traditional Vietnamese architecture, seamlessly blending into the unspoilt landscape. A magnet for couples and the spa savvy, the ultra-private Pool Villas are oh-so-romantic and the spa is Banyan Tree bliss at its best. Amid an array of treatments is the 90-minute Cajuput Healer, rejuvenating the body using locally produced cajuput oil, known for its healing benefits.

Foodies are also in their element and rave about signature restaurant Saffron, the Italian beachfront Azura and The Water Court with its alfresco seating and show kitchen. Guests can also dine at neighbouring sister resort Angsana Lăng Cô or take a cooking class to create local delicacies.

Clockwise from top; Banyan Tree Lăng Cô; View from Lagoon Pool Villa; Looking down over the resort; Imperial City of Hue



Abercrombie & Kent is offering 8 nights at Banyan Tree Lang Cô from £2,200 per person* on a B&B basis.

Original pioneers of the luxury African safari, Abercrombie & Kent has been at the forefront of the travel industry for more than 50 years. Every year it evolves, adding new destinations, properties and local knowledge. Call the brilliant travel team on:

01242 854 253 or visit: abercrombiekent.co.uk/banyan-tree.cfm

Bag it!

There is no better way to travel on your unforgettable journey than armed with the perfect companion – TUMI. Celebrating 40 years of travelling in style, TUMI's stunning limited edition anniversary collection, 'TUMI Discover' can be found online at uk.tumi.com



^{*} Subject to availability and preferred travel dates. Includes flights and transfers. Terms and conditions apply.



Mayanmar is emerging from the shadows with some exciting openings and blossoming in to one of the jewels of Southeast Asia

he profusion of golden Buddhist stupas dotting its landscapes has earned the nickname Land of Gold, and Myanmar (formerly Burma) is a nation rich in both colour and texture. Visitors are beguiled by saffron-robed monks wandering amongst crumbling colonial buildings, while heading beyond the cities draws into focus fertile river valleys and the emerald waters of an untapped coastline.

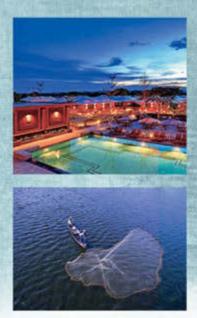
The former capital of Yangon is in a state of constructive flux. Glassy modern towers are rising to house much-needed hotels, while several decrepit historic buildings are in danger of being buildozed. Yangon Heritage Trust (yangonheritagetrust.org) is working to preserve the rich architectural heritage and offers specialist walking tours to explain the story behind Yangon's finest buildings, such as Gandhi Hall, City Hall and the High Court.

Other decadent remnants of pre-WWII Burma remain intact, notably the British tradition of afternoon team. Acacia Tea Salon (acaciateasalon.com) in Yangon serves imported teas in white porcelain pots with a silver platter of delicate pastries on a tiled veranda. Equally evocative of a bygone era is Kipling's Terrace at Savoy Hotel Yangon (savoy-myanmar.com), where pots of green tea are served on starched white tablecloths against the golden backdrop of Shwedagon Pagoda.

Since political reforms opened Myanmar to tourism, large peak season inflows have highlighted the shortage of hotel rooms. At the same time, it has galvanised small hoteliers to create stylish new stays. The Loft Hotel (theloftyangon.com) offers 32 contemporary A luxury cruise along the Ayeyarwady River is a leisurely way to appreciate the forested valleys and deltas of Myanmar's interior. If you are short of time, Belmond's Road to Mandalay (belmond.com), featuring classically style private cabins, a spa and an observation deck with a lounge bar, offers a three-day cruise from the former royal city of Mandalay to Bagan to see the majestic temple ruins spread across the Ayeryarwady Plains.

If exploring lost frontiers excites, Abercrombie & Kent (abercrombiekent. co.uk) journey off-track for an 11-day Hill Tribes of Myanmar tour. After visiting Yangon and a private long-tail boat exploration of Inle Lake, an ascent into the picturesque highlands brings you to the former British Hill Station of Kalaw, surrounded by pine forests and paddy terraces. Even more remote is Keng Tung, where small villages are inhabited by ethnic tribes, and Loimwe, a ghostly town where old colonial houses stand as silhouettes to a long-shadowed past.

1. LUNA FLIP FLOPS, £22, HAVAIANAS-STORE.COM 2. COTTER SUNGLASSES, £175, ORLEBARBROWN.COM 3. PROENZA SCHOULER CROSS BODY BAG, £1,475, HARVEYNICHOLS.COM 4. MINORI DRESS, £195, ORLEBARBROWN.COM 5. TOPAS





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: ANCIENT PAGAODAS IN BAGAN: THE POOL AT BAGAN LODGE; FISHING ON TAUNGTHAMAN LAKE





The disparate islands of Indonesia offer a diverse range of interest from the unique wildlife of Sumatra, and the famous island life of Bali and Lombok, to the urban regeneration of its capital city Jakarta

ne of 13 countries straddling the equator, Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago, comprising 17,508 islands threaded beneath continental Asia to the northern tip of Australia. Inhabiting its vast rainforests, grasslands, tropical coasts and snow-capped peaks is a cornucopia of wildlife ranging from the Java rhino to orangutans and cockatoos.

The capital Jakarta has embarked on a transformative urban renewal, including two giant towers – the 515-metre Signature Tower (signature-tower.com) and the 500-metre Pertamina Energy Tower (som.com/projects/pertamina_energy_tower) – and an ambitious redevelopment of Jakarta Bay. For a retro glimpse of old Jakarta (called Batavia by the Dutch colonists), head to Sunda Kelapa port in the northwest of the city. Here, several historic but derelict buildings – including the POS Indonesia, dating from 1746, which now hosts the Jakarta Contemporary Art Space – are being revitalised.

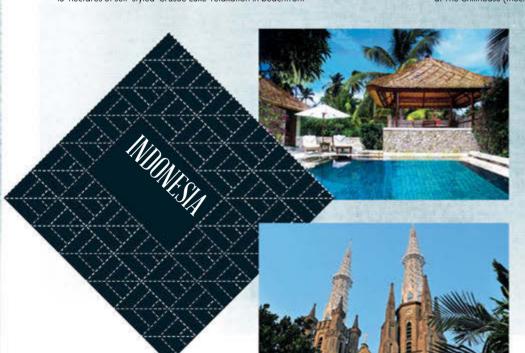
Bintam is the largest of the 3,000 islands in the northern Riau Archipelago is accessible by speedboat from Batam or by a 55-minute ferry from Singapore. Its rich ecosystem combines long stretches of sandy beach, forest canopies and protected mangroves. Spend the day kayaking or trekking through the rainforest to the 340-metre Mount Bintan for photogenic views. After dark, feast on chilli crab or 'gong gong' pearl conch in a kelong (stilted seaside restaurant) before bedding down at one of Bintang's seven resort hotels (bintan-resorts. com). If greater privacy is required, hire a boat captain for the five mile ride to the privately owned Nikoi Island (nikoi.com), offering 15-hectares of self-styled 'Crusoe Luxe' relaxation in beachfront

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: THE PRIVATELY OWNED NIKOI ISLAND: THE BOAT JETTY AT NIKOI ISLAND: THE OBEROI LOMBOK: THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL IN JAKARTA wooden bungalows styled with thatched roofs, private gardens and a sea-facing wooden deck terrace.

Sunsets, surfing and beach bars are among Bali's best-known attributes, but mountain biking down a volcano trail or across a rainforest track is a better kept secret. The venturesome biking guides at The Chillhouse (thechillhouse.com) will take you by two wheels across

the forested volcanic terrain, and return you to your hotel in time to watch a burning-pink Bali sunset – or you can bed down at their Canggu treetop loft in preparation for an expert surfing lesson next morning.

Having lived in the shadow of its showier neighbour Bali, Lombok is flourishing as the 'cool sibling', with quieter beaches, waterfalls curtained by rainforest, volcanic lakes and equally spectacular sunsets. Lombok's impressive retreat stays include The Oberoi, Lombok (oberoihotels.com) overlooking Medana Bay, and The Lombok Lodge (thelomboklodge.asia). A 14-night Idyllic Indonesia journey with Scott Dunn (scottdunn.com) combines quality beach time in Lombok and the Gili Islands with scuba diving and volcano climbing in Bali and a safari-style experience in the tropical rainforest of the secluded Barat National Park.





ASIA TRAVELLER PROMOTION

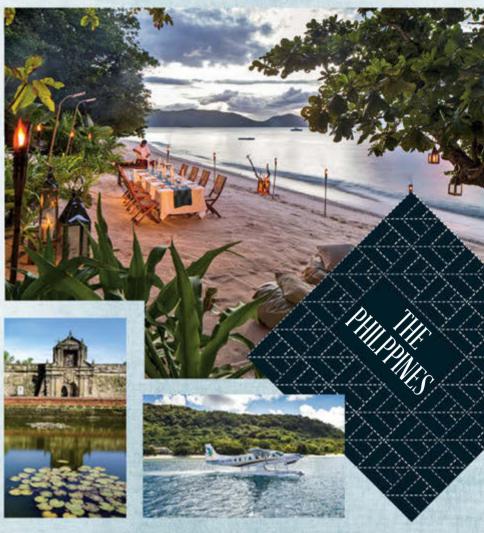
The Philippines are a colourful collection of islands with thousands of miles of white sand beaches just crying out to be relaxed upon

omprising 7,107 tropical islands scattered between the north of Indonesia and the southern tip of Taiwan with a history including three centuries of Spanish rule and 50 years of American control and an island culture drawing influences from across Southeast Asia, the Philippines is an extrovert nation that wears its colours on its sleeves.

Most visitors to the Philippines spend at least a short time in Manila, yet it remains one of Asia's least discovered capital cities. Seeking to right that wrong are the garrulous guides of Old Manila Walks (oldmanilawalks.com), who offer narrated strolls through the historic quarter of Intramuros, a culinary exploration of the intimate alleys of Binondo and the markets and street stalls of Chinatown, and a visit to Corregidor, an island fortress in Manila Bay known as 'the Rock' to learn about its wartime history.

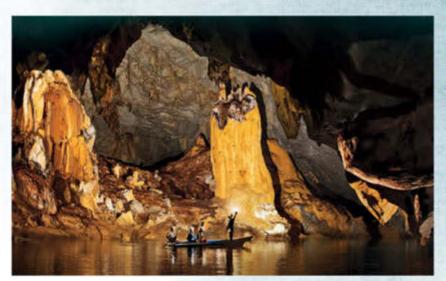
Filipino fiesta culture is hugely cherished, and across the archipelago it seems that dancing, music and colourful costumes are always just around the next corner. In October, the Masskara Festival in Bacolod City is an exuberant tropical paean to the Venice Mascarade. Harvest festival is imbued with ethnic costumes, tribal dances and floats during the week-long Kadayawan Festival in Davao City each August. Kickstarting Christmas in the Philippines, the Giant Lantern Festival in San Fernando (cityofsanfernando.gov.ph) dates from 1904, and features hand-sewn lanterns measuring up to 20 feet in diameter, illuminated by thousands of light bulbs, displayed across the city.

Comprising around 1,700 islands, Palawan is an archipelago within an archipelago, and combines natural adventure with picture-postcard white sand beaches calling out to be relaxed upon. Jump aboard a luxury yacht with Lightfoot Travel (lightfoottravel.com) and sail through this Unesco Biosphere Reserve to secluded islands covered in dense jungle, the limestone cliffs of Coron, and a volcanic lake at Cayang, plus world-class diving to spot nurse sharks and manta rays among



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
LEFT: BATHROOM AT
ARIARA ISLAND: PRIVATE
DINING AT ARIARA ISLAND:
ARRIVE IN STYLE AT
ARIARA: RIOT OF COLOUR
AT MASSKARA FESTIVAL:
FORT SANTIAGO IN MANILA:
LIMESTONE CAVES
IN PALAWAN

the corals of Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park (tubbatahareef.org). If the scenic splendour of Palawan entices you to stay a little longer, relax in reclusive style in a private beach cottage on the uninhabited Ariara Island (ariaraisland.com), where the 600 metres of soft white sand, forested rocks that attract myriad tropical birds and numerous coral reefs are combined with exclusive privacy in paradise.









Clockwise from top: View from the Earl Suite; The Baron Suite; By the Oasis pool without booking into Mulia Spa, a masterclass in relaxation and rejuvenation. World-class service and meticulous attention to detail top The Mulia experience off, cementing this superexclusive hideaway onto our Bali books. Hot, hot, hot for 2015.

ROMANTIC GETAWAY

Couples reserving the romantic getaway package (a minimum of three nights in the beachfront suites at The Mulia) will be treated to the finest champagne and caviar, a pampering session at Mulia Spa and dinner for two under the stars at Soleil. The concierge will also arrange exclusive airport transfers.

For further information call +62 361 302 777, email reservation@themulia.com or visit themulia.com

ulia Resort at Nusa Dua opened in 2013 and promptly scooped number one Beach Resort in the world, voted by readers of *Condé Nast Traveler* (US). This award-winning complex spread over 33 acres and dotted with sculptures, swimming pools and exotic flowers, is actually three properties in one. Mulia Resort is the big, bold centerpiece, complemented by two smaller options, The Mulia and Mulia Villas. It is The Mulia that couples have immediately been drawn to, a boutique all-suite hotel that oozes style and serenity.

Bang on the beachfront, The Mulia is just a stone's throw from the Indian Ocean. The one- and two-bedroom suites (111 in total) boast brilliant views; each is enormous with a spacious living area, huge bedroom and private patio complete with Jacuzzi. Add in the utmost privacy, personal butler service

and all the latest gadgets, it's no wonder this new kid on the beach is getting rave reviews. What we love most is the hotel's sleek look and stylish vibe. Floor-to-ceiling glass windows feature pretty much throughout, enhancing the already apparent sense of space while seamlessly blending interior with exterior. The infinity pool continues the flow, this time onto a one-kilometre stretch of blinding-white sand. Outside this tropical haven, guests have unlimited access to Mulia Resort's facilities. There's exceptional dining at the Japanese-style Edogin, wonderful fresh dishes at the Mediterranean-influenced Soleil and authentic Indonesian at The Cafe. And no stay here would be complete





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: THE GATE

OF ANGKHOR THOM:

RAFFLES HOTEL LE

ROYAL PHNOM PENH



The temples at Angkor are justifiably a wonder of the world, but visitors to Cambodia will also find safaris, beach resorts, cycle tours, and the gentrification of one of Asia's great cities

ambodia and Laos are two rising tourism stars of the Mekong Delta, although distinctive physical attributes set them apart. The Khmer ruins of Angkor Wat dominate Cambodia's tourism economy, but the gentrifying capital Phnom Penh, old French colonial outposts and coastal islands add extra appeal. A venerable Indochine institution, Raffles Hotel Le Royal Phnom Penh (raffles.com/phnom-penh) has welcomed luxury-seeking Oriental adventurers since 1929 with vintage-chic decors redolent of Victorian decadence and a landmark location in the heart of this fast-changing capital.

Guided safaris with Cambodia Jeep (cambodiajeep.com) go off track to explore Cambodia's rural heartlands. The six-day

Cardamom Adventure leaves Phnom Penh for the Cardomom Mountains, where you will jump on a mountain bike to reach the Koh Kong waterfalls. Back in the jeep, stay with a local family in Veal Veang, explore the former French colonial town of Battambang and ride on the famous bamboo train, tour traditional Cambodian wooden houses at Wat Kor and finish with a dirt track drive to Siem Reap.

A brief visit to Battambang (tourism cambodia.com) is rarely enough, especially as community minded boutiques and espresso bars, such as Café Eden (cafeedencambodia.com) are enhancing the Bohemian vibe. The Battambang Bike (facebook.com/ thebattambangbike) team provide hinterland cycle tours to get you better acquainted with the town and untapped scenic highlights, such as the Banan Temple ruins, which resemble a scaled down Angkor Wat.

The towering temple ruins of Angkor Wat attract millions of tourists determined to frame a perfect shot. Laurent Dambies, Founder of Angkor Photography Tours (angkorphotographytours. com), teaches special techniques to help amateur snappers bring alive the numerous temples and surrounding landscapes at sunrise, during the day or at night.

It's a wild ride through the jungles of Laos, but the adventure ends in grand style and comfort in the colourful capital

> andlocked Laos extends north through the forested spine of the Indochinese Peninsula, and an appetite for adventure is required to penetrate untamed

primeval backdrops evoking an Indiana Jones movie

The tropical rainforests, rivers and hillside of Laos (tourismlaos.org) are home to a diverse kingdom of animals. In southern Laos, spring is the best time to spot Irrawaddy dolphins in the Mekong River, while remote jungle excursions offer the prospect of sighting elephants, macaques, leaf monkeys and the white-bearded douc langur. The Nam Nern Night Safari (namet.org) guides you by long-tail boat along the Nam Et river valley in northeast Laos to view rare wildlife including the endangered Asian tiger, crested gibbons, black bears and outsized pythons.

Journey with All Points East (allpointseast.com) for the seven-day Images of Laos tour with professional photographer Gary Latham to capture the natural essence of this little-known land. The trip begins with a boat ride along the Mekong River from the picturesque town of Luang Prabang leaving behind its colourfully restored colonial French buildings. A scenic drive takes in the Hmong village of Ban Son Boom, the mysterious Plain of Jars (literally a plain full of megalithic jars) and the trip finishes in the capital Vientiane to snap its temples, street markets and the Mekong waterfront with views to Thailand on the opposite bank.

The lure of lingering awhile in the picturesque Unesco World Heritage town of Luang Prabang is hard to ignore, especially given its delightful hotels set amid tropical landscapes. Satri House (satrihouse.com) offers 32 rooms and suites decorated with intricately carved Lao wooden furnishings and antiques in an early 20th century mansion built by a Laotian prince, while Amantaka Luang Prabang (amanresorts.com/amantaka) occupies a collection of graceful 19th century French colonial buildings across a grand garden estate.









Turquoise Holidays takes us off the beaten track in search of authentic Thailand

urquoise Holidays' Thailand portfolio is hard to beat and the team is passionate about everything Thai. You can't help but be inspired by their enthusiasm and refreshing outlook, encouraging travellers to look beyond the beaches and to experience the country in its cultural and natural entirety. Part of this success is because they don't only know how to travel (they don't recommend anything they haven't seen & experienced first hand), but they 100 percent believe in community-based tourism, working with local companies to ensure the most authentic on-theground experiences possible.



PERFECT LOCATION

Top of the Turquoise list is off-the-beaten track Khum Lanna Lodge in the small village of Phrae (90 minutes fields this traditional Thai homestay not only gives Another authentic retreat is Lisu Lodge. Named after the nearby Lisu hill tribe village, this community-based project tribes. The accommodation is built in traditional Lisu style (with western comforts) and a stay here combines adventure and relaxation with culture. Take a tour of Lisu village with Chiang Mai, bed down in centrally located **Tamarind** Village the perfect base from which to visit the temples and bazaars of this ancient walled city.



Whether beach, city or jungle-bound, be sure to immerse yourself in everything Thai. Try a local sport like muay thai (Thai boxing). The Siam, Bangkok has its own muay thai boxing ring); take a cooking class; The Sarojin in the south's Khao Lak runs a brilliant one that includes a tasting and shopping tour of the local markets); and indulge in a Thai massage, there's always one around the corner. It's hard to pick from the world's spa capital but the Dheva Spa at **Dhara Dhevi** in Chiang Mai gets our vote for design wow factor and sheer volume of stress-busting treatments. We love Turquoise's behind the scenes take because they help you discover authentic Thailand. Every itinerary is 100 percent tailor-made and every property and excursion has been tested. For ideas and inspiration contact the expert team on 01494 678 400, email enquiries@turquoiseholidays. co.uk or visit turquoiseholidays.co.uk

authentic Thai style.

is not just confined to the north.

Elephant Hills in the depths of Khao Sok

National Park (easily accessible from Phuket) is a once-in-a-lifetime kind of place. The resort

consists of 30 luxury jungle tents and 10 that float

on a platform on Cheow Larn Lake in the middle

of the jungle. The backdrop is stunning and the

adventures unforgettable: canoe down the Sok

river, get up close and personal with elephants, trek through the jungle and experience the

perspective-changing serenity of living in the

rainforest. From inland to islands, a beach is a

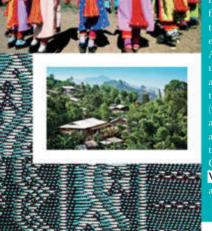
further south to the Belmond Napasai on

Koh Samui, a firm Turquoise favourite for it's

fabulous finale to any Thai trip and hot for 2015 is Soneva Kiri on far-flung Koh Kood, or head









The autumnal counterpart of Japan's beloved springtime sakura cherry blossoms, are the momiji maple leaves (jnto.go.jp), which spray the lakesides, riverbanks and hills in a tapestry of red, gold and orange in early winter. The cable car climb to Mount Nasu-dake, a 90-minute train ride from Tokyo, is a great spot to view the fiery hues from above in October. Adventure travellers may want to wait until November to hike through the maple-clad Yoro Valley to the Osawamata-no-taki waterfalls that cascade down stair-shaped rocks

Japan's unique culture and mystical natural canvas is best viewed with a backdrop of the people's beloved sakura cherry blossoms

Located 1,000 miles south of Tokyo, the 160 islands of Okinawa (beokinawa. com) are cherished by Japanese travellers for their unique local traditions and distinctive food culture blending influences from Japan, China and Southeast Asia. Among the archipelago's unexpected pleasure are the hillside ruins of the 13th-century Katsuren Castle near Uruma, the Amazon-like mangrove forests of Gesahi Bay, the cliffs and coral reefs of Manzamou Cape and the Mount Yaedake Nature Reserve famed for its wild orchids and the first cherry blossoms (usually mid January) of Japan's sakura season.

he kaleidoscopic imagery of Japan has enchanted travellers across the ages. An island nation nourished by four distinctive seasons, Japan's splendid natural canvas is painted in additional colours by its Buddhist temple and Shinto shrine ceremonies, Maiko culture and a globally revered cuisine defined by the à-la-minute freshness of its ingredients.

Part of the fun of travelling in Japan is riding the snub-nosed Shinkansen high-speed bullet trains that celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2014. Add in a traditional Japanese foot spa, and you can enjoy super-luxe rail travel.

Locals insist there is nowhere more beautiful in wintertime than the northern island of Hokkaido (en.visit-hokkaido.jp), the heartland of Japan's winter sports scene. Take advantage of Tokyo-based Michi Travel's (michitravel.com) insider knowledge on a seven-day Winter Wonderland Hokkaido break. Start in Sapporo, Hokkaido's largest city, to taste its fresh seafood, ramen noodles and, of course, the famous beer. Travel by train to Otaru to stay in a sumptuous hot spring ryokan, then on to Niseko for skiing on world-class slopes, snowshoeing in white-frosted woods and a lesson in building igloos.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: CHERRY BLOSSOMS IN OKINAWA: OTARU CTTY: BEDROOM AT THE ANDAZ TOKYO TORANOMON HILLS: SAPPORO BEER SIGNS: THE POOL AT ANDAZ TOKYO

TRAVELLER PROMOTION

in southern Chiba.



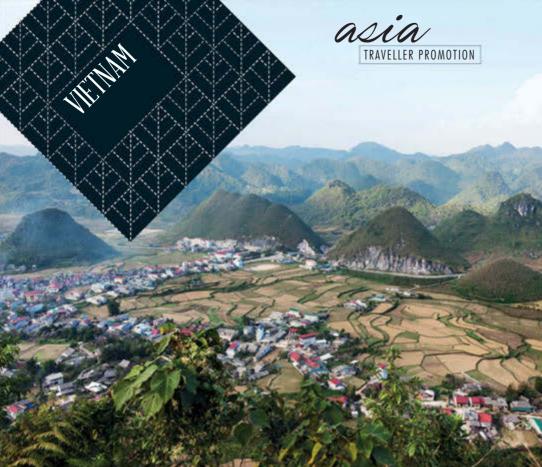






Introduced in mid-2014, the Toreiyu (jreast.co.jp/e) train runs between Fukushima and Shinjo and features a well-stocked sake bar and a 'spa car' with two foot baths raised on stone platforms.

For a sky-high stay in Tokyo, the 164-room Andaz Tokyo Toranomon Hills (tokyo.andaz.hyatt.com) is located in the capital's second-tallest skyscraper. The spacious guest rooms occupy the 47th-50th floors, but the ultimate high is offered by the 52nd-floor Rooftop Bar, where you can sip a yuzu and ginger daiquiri and nibble miyazaki beef mini burgers with Tokyo's neon-lit night skyline presented through floor-to-ceiling windows.





CLOCKWISE FROM FAR
LEFT: HILLS DOMINATE
THE LANDSCAPE IN
NORTHERN VIETNAM:
TRIBESWOMAN IN
TRADITIONAL DRESS:
HOTEL DE LOPERA IN
HANGE ENTRANCE OF THE
HOTEL DE LOPERA: SPA
SUITE AT AMAROT VINH HY
BAY. NEAR NHA TRANG



Vietnam has a compelling history, both ancient and modern,
for visitors to get their teeth into... to say nothing of the

ugging the entire east coast of the Indochina Peninsula,
Vietnam's S-shaped strip of land borders China to the
north and Laos and Cambodia to the west. Mountains
and hills comprise almost three quarters of its interior
before gently descending toward 2,000 miles of
tropical shoreline.

country's magnificent mountains and coastline

Temperate northern Vietnam is coveted for its romantic mist-laced mountains and forested valleys inhabited for centuries by nomadic tribes. Venture into the Vietnamese interior on a Hill Tribes and Rice Terraces tour with Remote Lands (remotelands.com). Begin gently amid the graceful French colonial architecture and colourful street markets of the capital Hanoi, before boarding the elegant Victoria Express train for an overnight ride to Sapa, set amongst the densely clothed highlands northwest of Hanoi. Here, a hillside meander through terraced rice paddies leads to the village of Ta Phin to visit the indigenous Kinh, Dao and Hmong peoples.

At Hotel de l'Opera (hoteldelopera.com) in central Hanoi, colonnaded terraces, theatrical décor and jewel tints in the furnishings evoke a night at the opera in this most French of Indochine cities. If coastal chic is preferred, Amano'i Vinh Hy Bay (amanresorts.com) is Aman Resorts' first hotel in Vietnam. Set along a deserted stretch of coastline a two-hour drive south of Nha Trang, each villa features a private infinity pool and lunch can be taken on a spacious terrace overlooking the sweeping bay.

There really is only one way to fully appreciate the imperial city of Hue, by motorbike. Jump on a 125cc road bike with Hue Adventures (hueadventures.com) for a guided ride through moated palaces, tombs, temples and large stone courtyards filled with intricately carved statues of elephants, horses and soldiers. Afterwards, ride into the vibrant green countryside skirting the Perfume River to small Buddhist monasteries hidden beneath caves and forested

peaks where fierce battles were fought during the Vietnam War. The lush backwaters of the Mekong Delta exist within a unique biosphere. Charter a custom-designed speedboat from Les Rives (lesrivesexperience.com) to follow the meandering waterways past

riverside flower and produce markets, stop at traditional Mekong villages surrounded by rice paddies and sample fresh coconuts, Mekong whisky and fried elephant ear fish, a local river delicacy. Before returning to Ho Chi Minh City, take a detour to the incomparable Cao Dai Temple. Painted in bright hallucinatory shades this mélange of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and Roman Catholicism is decorated with a pantheon of saints including Confucius, Julius Caesar and Victor Hugo.

The bustling southern city of Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) is the transit point for visiting the Mekong Delta, and Turquoise (turquoiseholidays.co.uk) offers a 10-day tour that combines an exploration of the city's beguiling French colonial architecture, street markets and cafes, compelling war museum and a blissful beach retreat on Con Dao, a tropical archipelago that is just a 40-minute flight away in the South China Sea.

1. RED GINGHAM CUTAWAY SHIRT, \$44, TRASHNISS.COM 2. NORTH SHORRE SUNSET SWIM TRUNKS, £65, MRPORTER.COM 3. NEPTUNE STONES BARCELE \$17, TRASHNESS.COM 4. BEDLINGTON SEERSUCKER LINEN COTTON BLEND TROUSER, £155, ORLEBARBROWN, COM 5. SCARF, £59, JOHNSTONSCASHMERR COM 6. BROWN SLIP ON SNEAKER, £395, CARLORAZOLIN.COM









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James Villas are offering CNT readers 15% off a one week stay to their stunning Villa Quinta Da Luz in Algarve. This magnificently restored farmhouse is set in 12 acres of private grounds (with a private pool and sauna) and spectacular views of the sea and surrounding countryside. To book call 0800 074 01 22 and quote CNT Reader Offer. One week villa booking valid from 09.09.15–10.10.15. Subject to availability. Terms & conditions apply. ** www.jamesvillas.co.uk



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Sisley's Phyto 4 Ombres contains micro-sized pigments to illuminate the eyelids with pure and longlasting colour. Various layers of mother-of-pearl result in a variety of finishes to take you seamlessly from day to night without drying the skin. £57, Sisley-paris.co.uk

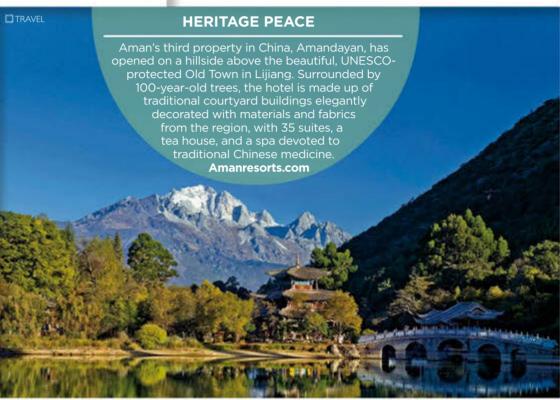


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FASHION

MOC THE WEEK

JM Weston is renowned for finely crafted shoes made with traditional expertise and its latest twist on the iconic 180 moccasin is Le Moc Weston. Le Moc has been pared back to the essentials, offering a comfortable and lightweight feel – its inimitable look is sure to continue to be favoured by presidents, businessmen and artists. £390, 020 7629 9494



BY JUNIPER!

The cocktail of the season is **Caorunn Gin**'s new Spring Herbs G&T. All you need is one part Caorunn Gin and two parts tonic water, garnished with a thin celery stalk coated in black pepper and a slice of apple.

RRP £27, available in selected stores



☐ HEALTH & BEAUTY

SPECIAL EDITION

The EDITION Istanbul hotel is set within the city's lively Levent neighbourhood, and Eastern touches are present throughout the building: walls, ceilings and floors are lined with mosaic tiles and public spaces are bejeweled with bronze and gold leaf. The three-floor ESPA Spa, with its traditional hammam, has an abundance of pampering treatments.

Editionhotels.com





DOING IT BY THE BOOK

Louis Vuitton has introduced two beautiful travel books, part of a new collection that offers a new and contemporary vision of the world, both real and virtual. 'Edinburgh' is by French illustrator and writer Floc'h and 'The Arctic' is by Irish painter Blaise Drummond – each volume is a work of art in its own right.

£38, louisvuitton.co.uk

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ARGENTINE POLO PLAYER WHO IS A ST
REGIS CONNOISSEUR, TICKETS: STREGIS.





SPF is now considered an essential part of day-to-day skincare and one of the best has to be **Elethea** Revitalising High Protection Fluid SPF30. Key ingredients include antioxidants, manuka honey for its antibacterial properties, turmeric oil to brighten the skin and cucumber extract to revitalise and detoxify while protecting from the sun's harmful rays. **£75, elethea.com**





GO HOLISTIC

The Akasha Holistic Wellbeing Centre at London's Café Royal has an 18-metre lap pool, dedicated Watsu pool, private hammam and a multitude of pampering amenities. Now the skincare range by Sodashi, known for its chemical-free, high-performance products, has been added to the list of spa treatments. Particularly recommended is the Sodashi Chakra Balancing Treatment which brings even the most out-of-sync chakras into alignment through a fluid combination of massage, essential oil blends and healing crystals. Hotelcaferoyal.com, Sodashi Chakra Balancing Treatment, £200



WILD ABOUT TASMANIA

THALIA HAVEN IS AN 'OFF THE GRID' LUXURY SECLUDED HOUSE ON TASMANIA'S INCREDIBLE EAST COAST. BUILT FROM ANCIENT STONE AND SURROUNDED BY OLIVE TREES, IT HAS A PRIVATE WHITE SANDY BEACH AND UNOBSTRUCTED VIEWS ACROSS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL STRETCHES OF WATER, GREAT OYSTER BAY. VISITORS HAVE SOLE USE OF THE HOUSE, WITH THE OPTION TO BRING IN A PRIVATE CHEF AND GROCERY SHOPPING SERVICE. WITH THE LODGE POWERED ONLY BY THE SUN AND THE WIND, AND IMMERSED IN NATURE, GUESTS WILL JUST HAVE THE ISLAND'S ABUNDANT WILDLIFE FOR COMPANY. A 10-NIGHT LUXURY SELF-DRIVE HOLIDAY IN TASMANIA INCLUDING THREE NIGHTS AT THALIA HAVEN COSTS FROM £1,495 PER PERSON, WITH CAR HIRE (FLIGHTS ARE ADDITIONAL). FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT TASMANIANODYSSEY.COM

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FROM ASSEMBLING AND DONATING BICYCLES, PAINTING CLASSROOMS AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO
PLANTING SEEDS IN LOCAL PARKS - ALL OF WHICH WILL GUARANTEE A MORE LASTING HOLIDAY







DOM MIND IF I DO

Wine connoisseurs will be delighted to hear that Dom Pérignon Champagne has created **The Atelier Dom Pérignon**, designed to immerse you in the heavenly world at the Abbey of Saint-Pierre d'Hautvillers. This was the home of the Benedictine monk Dom Pérignon who transformed the culture of the vine and winemaking and is now buried within the Abbey itself. You will learn about the singularities of each Plénitude through a tasting of three vintages and Dom Pérignon Rosé, while also covering the perfect service of Champagne, a food and wine experience, and a final tasting around a selected Champagne.

About £430 per person, atelierdomperignon@domperignon.fr, +33 3 26 51 33 39



HEALTH & BEAUTY



SUN SALUTATION

Feeling in need of a detox? Château Saint-Martin & Spa has partnered with Ananda in the Himalayas and renowned yoga guru Krit Thackerto to create a seven- or nineday bespoke package including stimulating and purifying Ayurvedic therapies, yoga, meditation and theoretical aspects of yogic tradition. Château Saint-Martin is party of the iconic Oetker Collection and is situated in the heart of the French Riviera with breathtaking views over the surrounding olive groves and lavender gardens. chateau-stmartin.com

Preferred Hotel group has rebranded its company to Preferred Hotels & Resorts and now offers five diverse collections promising to meet your preferences at any time for any occasion. PreferredHotels.com





Hotel Eden has created a culinary journey that brings together the best of Italian gastronomy by partnering with fellow Michelin-starred hotels Capri Palace & Spa and Hotel II Pellicano to create a six-day tour with menus designed by some of the leading chefs in Italy. Available 23 April-11 October 2015, from £1,960 per person based on sixnight minimum stay. +39 06 478121, reservations.her@

dorchestercollection.com



HOSTE WITH THE MOST

If you're tempted by a British coastal retreat, then The Hoste is a wonderful historic hotel and bar in Norfolk. Dating back to the 16th century, it is set in one of the county's most picturesque villages, Burnham Market, and was once favoured by Lord Nelson (who stayed in room 5) - it's now frequented by young British royals. The open wood-burning fire in the bar is particularly welcoming after a walk on the beach. **Thehoste.com**

Traveller

Dream Destinations EUROPE-UK



LA SABLONNERIE HOTEL. A convivial corner of a beautiful island. Gorgeous gardens, peace and tranquillity, birds, butterflies, flowers, horses and carriages butteflies, flowers, horses and carriages no cars – how could one not enjoy this amazing paradise? You will find this hotel to have a great joie de virre' as well as terrific food. La Sablonnerie has recently received the highly coveted award from Condé Nast Johansen - 'Small Hotel of the Year', Visit www.sablonneriesark.com or call 01481 832 061.



Set beside a stunning courtyard garden Blenheim Cottage offers tranquil luxury. With farmhouse character, a woodburner, microbrewery and Master Butcher, everything is in place for a cosy week away. Quote 'Hamper' for a complimentary Oxfordshire food hamper (exp. 01/06/15) www.xoxfordcountrycottages.co.uk +44 (0)7830 165830.



Deelin Mor Lodge is a secluded retreat in the midst of the Burren, one of Ireland's most unique areas of outstanding natural beauty. This design led family home, built in the style of an Irish Georgian hunting lodge, accommodates up to 10 people and is perfect for holdgys, special occasions or a weekend break, www.deelinmor.com veekend break. www.de el: +353 65 708 9009.



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Website: www.themiddlehambeuro.com



Dream Destinations EUROPE



Hotel dei Borgognoni – Rome. Enjoy your sleep at this privately owned hotel. With just a 4 minute walk from the Spanish Steps and the Trevi Fountain, it is ideally located. This Boutique hotel is offering Conde Nast Johansens readers an exclusive extra 5% discount on the web rates. Insert code johansens 2013 in the booking engine of the hotel. Visit: www.hotelborgognoni.com tel: +39 06 69941505.



Hotel Relax Torreruja Thalasso & Spa, Sardinia. Situated on the north west coast of Sardinia offering a superb setting above the picturesque fishing port of Isola Rossa, this attractive Delphina hotel will suit couples wishing to relax in an environment with good food, lovely views and sunsets with the added benefit of the spa. www.justsardinia.co.uk 01202 484858.



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Dream Destinations ASIA



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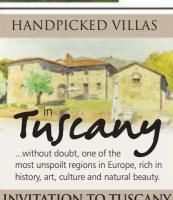
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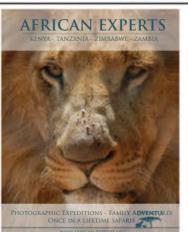
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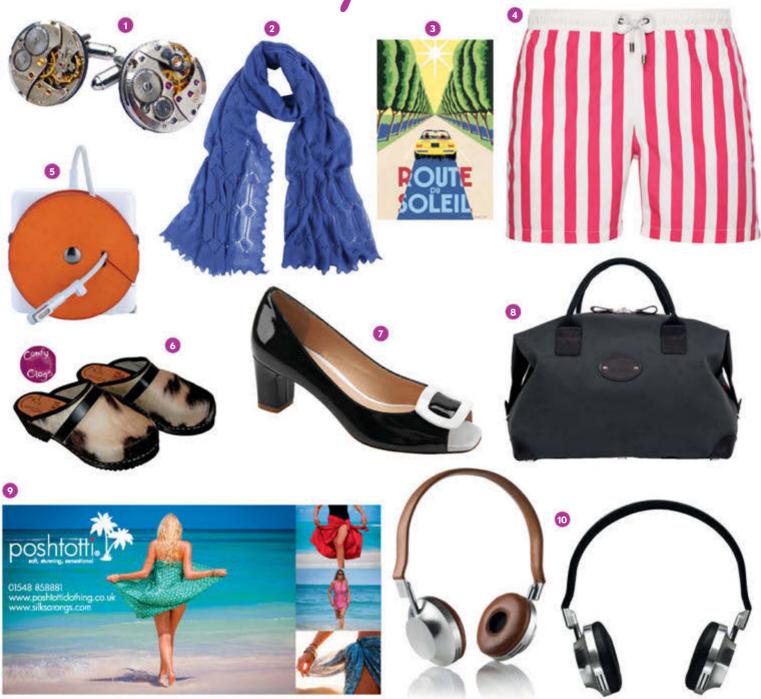
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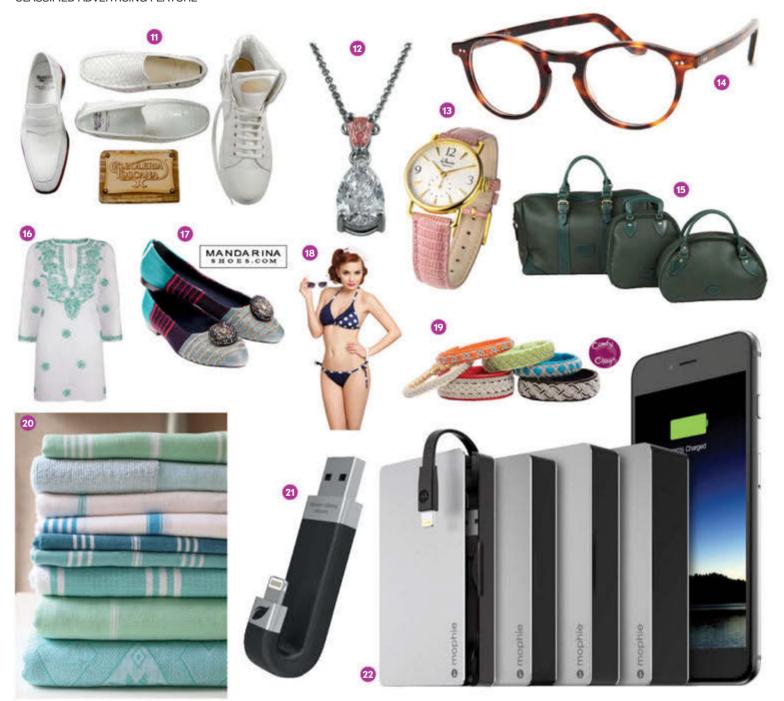
mounted as cufflinks. Presented in a vintage inspired box, £49 – by Pretty Eccentric. Visit www.prettyeccentric.co.uk or call 07870 607925.

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- 8. CHAPMAN BAGS channels the best of British heritage with hand-finished bags in natural fabrics and soft, vegetable-tanned leather trims. The brand's contemporary take on traditional travel pieces includes sleek items like this Classic Brushed Cotton Canvas Leather-trim Holdall in storm grey, £230. Shop Chapman Bags at www.charlesfordlondon.com or call 020 7607 6222.
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 12. SIMON WRIGHT JEWELLERY. New for 2015, bespoke jeweller Simon Wright is creating beautiful petite diamond Fiorella pendants. Each Fiorella pendant is individually made for you from a selection of natural fancy pink diamonds. Rare pink diamond and fine white diamond set in sparkling platinum. By appointment only. Contact 020 7490 0665 or visit www.sw-jewellery.com
- 13. Pretty in pink, DU MAURIER WATCHES introduces the Daphne Signature Silver. Part of a limited edition collection of just 300, this beautiful, Swiss-made piece is the ultimate summer accessory. Daphne Signature Silver with pink lizard strap £440. Also available with light blue, red or black strap. See the full collection at www.dumaurierwatches.com or call 0845 5193074
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- 19. COMFY CLOGS. Swedish samibracelets have finally arrived in London! The incredibly popular bracelets you can see on many stars today, are made of reindeer leather with silver and pewter thread with an antler button. Sizes for children, women and men. Visit www.comfyclogs.net or call Cecilia on 07815 750340 or 020 8780 9767 to find out more.

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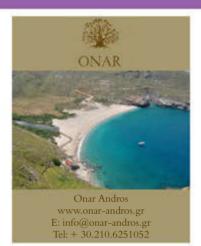






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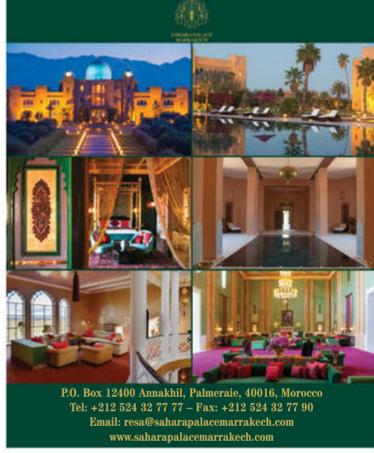


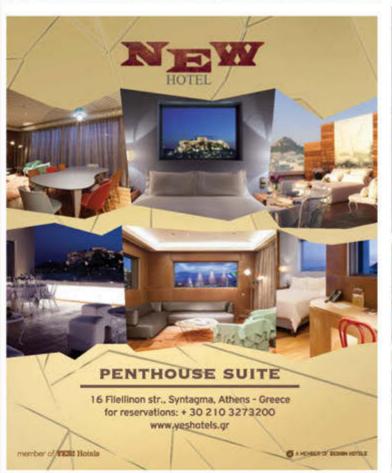


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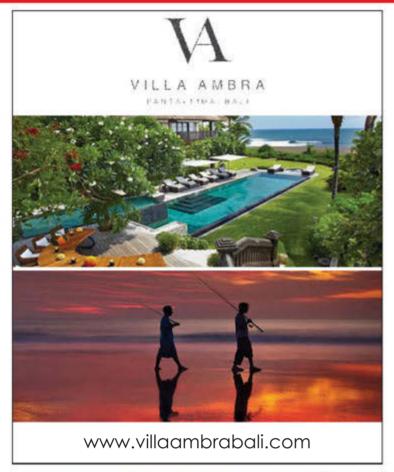






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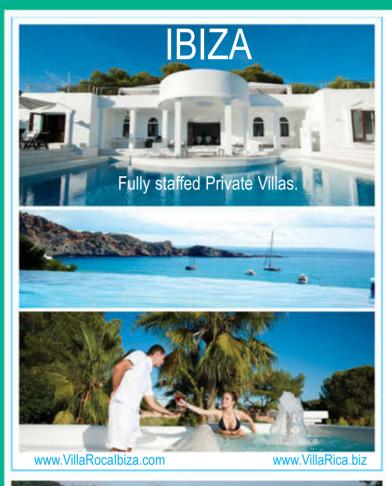
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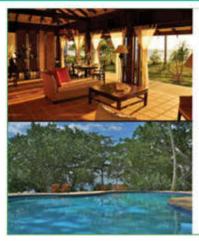


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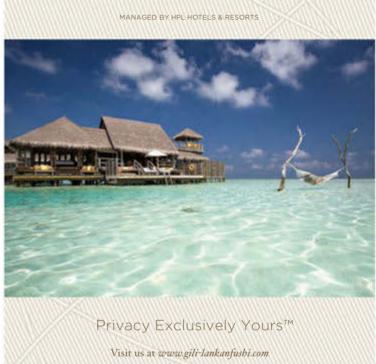


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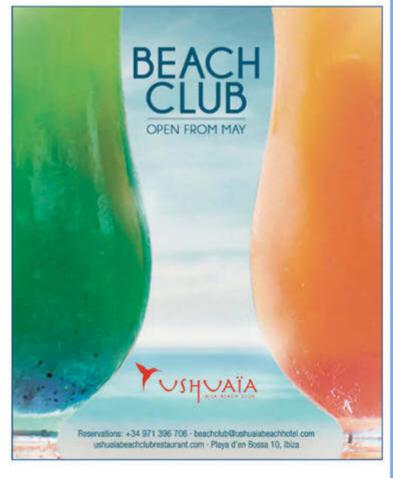
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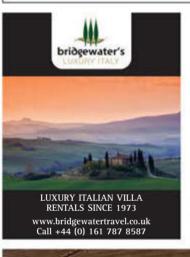


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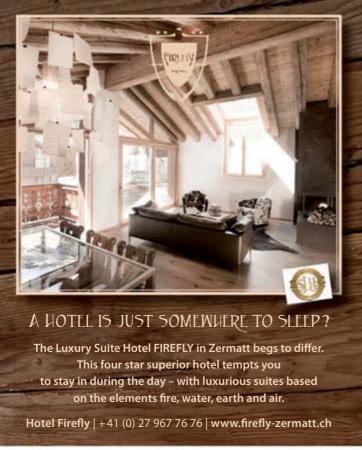
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WHERE ARE WE? SU GOLOGONE, SARDINIA

WHY WE LOVE IT Back in the 1960s a gentleman by the wonderfully musical name of Peppeddu Palimodde, together with his wife Pasqua, opened a restaurant in the heart of Sardinia, near the natural spring of Su Gologone. At that time few visitors to the island came this far inland and there were no restaurants to speak of. But Peppeddu trusted in the beauty of the surroundings and a simple menu based around sheep's cheese and grilled meat, and he duly prospered. Soon he opened a small hotel so that diners at the restaurant, arriving from afar, would have somewhere to stay. Nowadays the hotel is run by Peppeddu and Pasqua's daughter, Giovanna. An artist and collector, she has blended rustic and contemporary elements to create the distinctive Su Gologone style, with bright accents of terracotta, textiles, ceramics and exposed beams set against cool white plaster and sail-like awnings. In the public spaces and rooms there are original works by Sardinian artists including Giuseppe Biasi and Costantino Nivola, alongside traditional costumes and embroidered shawls. Surrounding the hotel there are sheer canyons, verdant gorges and shadowy grottoes. Mount Tiscali and its ancient Nuragic village, the Lanaitto Valley and the Cedrino River (which is excellent for kayaking) are all within easy reach, either on foot or by four-wheel drive. But the chief pleasures of Su Gologone are closer to hand – an apertivo at the outdoor bar with the tinkling of sheep bells in the background, or simply watching the sun set and the colours change on the slopes of Mount Corrasi from the Terrazzo dei Sogni, the terrace of dreams. ORNELLA D'ALESSIO







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